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THE
SUNSET OF THE HEROES

THE SUNSET OF THE HEROES

LAST ADVENTURES OF THE TAKERS OF TROY

BY W·M·L·HUTCHINSON

Illustrated by Herbert Cole

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JUN 22 1951

"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of noble knights
Whereof this world holds record. . . ."

Morte d'Arthur.

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THE SUNSET OF THE HEROES

PROLOGUE

How the giving of an apple brought war to Troy Town

PRIAM, King of Troy, was renowned throughout all the lands of the East for the long life of cloudless prosperity wherewith the gods had blessed him. Forty years had he reigned and still was in his prime, being yet a child when he inherited the kingdom; and in all those years it had been well with him. Peace

was within his walls and plenteousness within his borders; his folk were leal and flourishing, his broad demesnes rich in corn and oil, his flocks and herds as the sands of the sea for multitude; but in nothing was he esteemed more fortunate than in the number of goodly children that Hecuba his Queen had borne to him.

Now when she had already reared eight sons and four daughters, the Queen dreamed that she brought forth a blazing torch; and the soothsayers, being called together to interpret the dream, declared with one voice that the child she next should bear would prove a firebrand to Troy and kindle a flame therein which should consume both city and folk. Not long after, she bore another son; and King Priam, in dread of that prophecy, bade a trusty slave take the babe secretly to the great mountain called Ida, that looks down on the plain of Troy, and there cast it forth to perish. And to grieve his Queen the less, he caused her women to tell her that the babe was born dead.

The slave carried away the new-born child as he was bidden; but when he was about to leave it on the cold hillside, his heart failed him for pity, and he brought it to certain herdsmen that dwelt on Ida, pretending to have found it by chance. Now the wife of one of these herdsmen, moved with compassion, took the foundling and reared it as her own, being herself childless.

So this king's son, to whom his foster-parents gave the name of Paris, grew up among the glens of many-fountained Ida with herdsmen and shepherds for his

companions; but though bred a rustic, the delicate comeliness of the lad and his gracious bearing would have well beseemed a palace hall. He had, moreover, the gift of ready and persuasive speech, a voice musical as falling water, and a smile that melted the heart like a caress; few of his rough comrades were ever known to deny him anything, and the saying went among them that Paris could wile the bird from the bough. Nor was it over these simple folk only that he could cast a glamour, as this tale will show.

There is among the vales of Ida one lovelier than all the rest, and lonelier, for it lies near the mountain-top, and its steep sides are walled with dense-growing pines. At the head of the glen, a brook comes leaping down rocky cornices, and swirling through fern-fringed pools and pebbly shallows, falls at its lower end over a sheer crag, in clouds of rainbow spray. Keen-eyed and sure-footed must you be to spy and to climb the dizzy ladder that here tough roots of broom, and there a jutting rock, make up the face of the crag, close to the foam and thunder of the cataract; few or none of the hill-folk had ever found that sole path to the fair, sequestered lawns above. But Paris had found it, roving one summer's day in idle mood, and found, too, that the glen was not wholly untenanted. It was the haunt of a Fairy—one of those swift, shy daughters of the Flood and Fell whom men of old called Oreads. White-limbed, slender, tall, with dusky, rippling hair, she stood before the intruder half-angered, half-afraid; swaying a little, as a sapling birch sways in the breeze, and her eyes were like dark hill-tarns that the breeze has ruffled.

Paris spoke to her, in that silver voice of his, wooing her to stay, to listen, to tell him who she was, beckoning gently the while as one might soothe a startled fawn; until with a fawn's timid grace she tripped nearer, still nearer, and looked into his smiling eyes, wonderingly. "I am Œnone, daughter of Ida," she said, soft and low. "And you, I think, must be the young Apollo, fairest of the heaven-dwelling gods. For I have heard that his sunny hair floats to his shoulders, even as yours, and that his eyes, too, are emerald, and how he loves to put on the guise of a shepherd."

Then Paris, laughing, told her he was no Immortal, but in good sooth the shepherd lad he seemed, who kept his peasant father's flock upon the hills, saving when he played truant for a day, as he was doing now. And much more he found to tell her; so much, that the golden hours of that summer's day fleeted ere they knew. Dusk had fallen when Paris left the glen, whispering that he would come again; and as he went the heart of the Oread went with him. Thenceforward all her bliss was in his comings; and those comings were many, for he could pass his time as he listed, never hindered or questioned by his doting foster-parents. Blithe as children, Œnone and her new playmate would frolic on the meadow-lawns, or weave each other wildflower garlands; or she would show him the lair of hill-fox or spotted pard, where —for all the wild things knew and loved the Oread— the mother-beast would suffer them to fondle her furry, romping cubs. But at sultry noontide they would seek hand in hand some cool recess of the

rocks, or mossy hollow beneath the pines, and fall asleep to the lullaby of the brook.

So passed the summer; until one morning Paris found his sweet friend weeping, and, heartstruck, asked what ailed her.

"Alas," she answered, through her tears, "I have heard tidings of a thing that will surely sunder you and me."

"Nothing shall sunder us two," he cried, boldly.

"Nothing—while you love me," she murmured, "but my heart misgives me sorely that you will soon love me no more."

"Foolish Œnone," said Paris, tenderly, "have you forgotten what I have sworn to you so often—and so deeply? Shall I call the gods once more to witness that I will never have love or bride in all my life but you?"

"No, do not swear it!" exclaimed Œnone. "The gods laugh, 'tis said, at lovers' perjuries, and avenge not the breaking of vows made in fondness—and yet I have a dread of evil befalling you if you should prove forsworn."

"Put me to the test, then," answered Paris, smiling. "Come with me even now to my homestead, and this very day we will be wedded. At your bidding I have kept our meetings secret—none guesses that a daughter of Ida has stooped to love me—but now, since you doubt my faith, let me prove it as best a man may."

"You must prove it, indeed," sighed the Oread, "but not thus, belovéd. Now hear my tidings. When I woke at dawn, a rainbow spanned the glen,

and beneath its arch I saw Iris the Messenger, waving her many-coloured wings. In her hand was an apple that shone like pure gold. She called to me by name, and holding forth the wondrous fruit—'Œnone,' she said, 'this was cast yester-eve upon the board where all the gods adorned with their presence the marriage-feast of a highly favoured mortal. To that feast came also a guest unbidden, undesired, even Discord, hated of gods and men; this apple flung she down, crying, "For her whose title it bears," and so departed with an evil laugh. But on the apple was engraven FOR THE MOST FAIR, and loud debate arose, which of the goddesses should take it; until three who surpass in divine beauty stood forth and claimed it, the rest yielding them pre-eminence. These three were Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, among whom none of the gods would presume to judge, as they said. Then spake King Zeus, "We will make a mortal the judge; thus shall we defeat the intent of loathéd Discord, to sow feuds and ill-will among us. This judge must be prudent, yet simple; a stranger to courts and cities, yet no churl; neither must he know or be known by any of the three goddesses. Such a judge will declare his mind without fear or favour—and such is Paris, the shepherd lad of Mount Ida."'"

At these words, Paris gave a cry of astonishment. "*I* the judge of goddesses!" he exclaimed. "Have you not dreamed all this, Œnone? You shake your head, and sigh—ah, now I guess what bred your doubt of me; you think the sight of these beautiful heaven-dwellers will turn my heart from you! I tell you, if indeed I am made judge of the fairest, that

apple is yours; never a goddess of them all can vie in loveliness with my woodland queen."

"Hush, hush," murmured the Oread, laying a finger on his lips, "you know not what you say. As a glow-worm's spark to the splendour of the moon, so is all Earth-born beauty to that of the Sky-Children. Hear my tidings to the end. Iris said further, that by command of Zeus the three goddesses would shortly be here; she bade me prepare you for your high task and give you the marvellous prize you are to bestow."

So saying, she drew the apple of Discord from her bosom and laid it in the youth's hand. Of purest gold it was, and smelt ambrosially, for it was a fruit magical, grown on the dragon-guarded Tree of the Hesperides. Thence had Discord stolen it, unseen of the sleepless warder; for that Wicked One flies abroad invisible at her pleasure, and she had bethought her how it might serve to stir up strife among the happy gods. Paris read aloud the inscription on its gleaming rind, and, between jest and earnest, would have slipped it into Œnone's hand again; but she put it aside with a startled gesture, glided from him, and was lost to view amid the pines.

She had marked, though he did not, a crested peacock alight on the nearest tree-top, and a golden cloud brooding above the peacock. As the bird uttered its shrill scream, Paris looked upward; he saw the cloud take the shape of a pillar and float to earth; white radiance glowed within it, while the enveloping gold turned bluish-grey, curling forth on the bright air in wreaths of odorous vapour. And as that incense-breathing cloud parted and dissolved,

a Lady stood revealed; taller than the daughters of men, arrayed in white robes that dazzled the eye like snow-drifts in sunshine, and wearing a glittering veil thrown back from her crownéd brows. Lilies of pearl and gold made her diadem; the sceptre she bore was ivory, topped by a cuckoo carved out of sapphire. But more plainly than these splendours, her countenance and mien, august beyond all earthly majesty, proclaimed the goddess.

Bending on Paris her large eyes, brown and lustrous as the eyes of kine, she spoke thus, in deep, mellow tones: "Look on me, shepherd of Ida! I am Hera, Queen of Gods, Hera, Bride of Zeus. Riches and honour come of me; royal sway, the revenues of wide dominions, the homage of cities and peoples—these are my gifts to mortals, and all these shall be yours if you accord me the prize that is my due. Look on me, Paris, look well, and say, am I not peerless?"

"Look on me also," broke in another voice, that rang sweet and clear as a silver trumpet.

With that, Paris was aware of a stately form that stood at his right hand, leaning on a great, gleaming spear. It was the form of an armed Maiden. Her head was covered by a golden helm, embossed with shapes of wingéd steeds, and crested with a steed's milk-white mane; she wore a breastplate of golden scales, thickly fringed with gold serpents, over her azure tunic, and carried a golden shield inwrought with combats of gods and giants. By these accoutrements, Paris knew her for the Virgin Warrior, Athena, whom men call also Pallas.

"Look at me well, Paris," she said again, "for they that judge me fairest must do so for mine own sake, without guerdon promised. Yet if, being mortal, your eyes are bewildered in the light of heavenly presences, remember this: Athena's gift is wisdom, wherein alone lies true sovereignty. Hera can make you king over others, but I can make you lord of yourself, and master of your fate. For the wise man, having conquered fear and desire, is himself unconquerable by men or gods."

The speaker paused, and Paris earnestly regarded her. He marked that the hair clustered beneath her helm was the colour of winter beechwoods; her shape, even taller than Hera's, as nobly though less bounteously moulded; her features, though softened by immortal bloom, were masculine in their severe perfection, their impress of thought and of power. Suddenly the goddess raised her downcast eyelids and flashed full upon him those eyes that have not their like in earth or heaven. Twin founts of living fire—twin stars whose springing radiance overflowed in a tide that seemed engulfing him—which was it he beheld? Shrinking, yet powerless to avert his gaze, the youth stood terror-charmed, like a bird that helplessly returns the serpent's stare. But in another moment, the blinding brilliance passed; a film of twilight seemed to curtain those twin orbs, and as his sight undazzled he knew them for what they were—two eyes of darkest grey, lovely, steadfast, inscrutable.

"They are more glorious than even Queen Hera's," he murmured half aloud, "but—they are terrible; were Athena angered, surely she could slay with a

look! I am bewildered, as she said—how shall I dare to choose? Hera promises me power, Athena wisdom——"

"But I," said a laughing voice behind him, "will promise you something better than either—a wife who is the most beautiful woman alive. Turn, and look on Aphrodite, shepherd!"

Paris turned and saw, throned on a flowery knoll, one whose deep gold hair was crowned with roses, and fell in shining waves to her very feet. The Third Goddess drew back that resplendent veil from either shoulder with pearly, slender fingers, as she stepped lightly to his side. "Am not *I* the fairest?" she asked him, in a voice like the cooing of doves; and with an exquisite smile she lifted eyes of the wild hyacinth's blue to his. Who may declare what then he looked upon? As all the breath and bloom of summer is garnered in a rose, as all the changeful sheen of ocean is housed in a pearl, so all bodily beauty that mind can dream of, or heart desire, dwelt eternal in Aphrodite. And nevertheless, even while he feasted his eyes on her who is Love's Queen and Mother both, Paris felt that something diviner than her loveliness, more serene than Hera's majesty, illumined the full brow of Pallas Athena.

He held the fateful apple out at arm's length, looking irresolutely from one to another of the waiting three.

"Give it to me, Paris," said Hera, proudly. "Behold, all men strive for Power, but few seek after Wisdom, for that is a barren gift, which the strong need not, and the weak find of small avail. Know, fair youth,

Then turned once more towards Athena expecting that she also would speak again. But Athena held her peace.

that, though peasant-bred, the blood of kings runs in your veins. Does it not leap to your heart at the thought of a kingly crown? Then yield me the apple, and a crown you shall wear, by grace of Heaven's Queen."

Almost persuaded, so much surprise and newborn ambition thrilled him at these words, Paris took one step towards Hera—then turned once more to Athena, expecting that she also would speak again. But Athena held her peace.

"What profits it, my Paris," came Aphrodite's low voice in his ear, "what profits it a man to gain all power and all wisdom, if therewithal he have no pleasure in his days? Youth withers like the rose, loveless, joyless Age creeps on apace, Death ends all, as a tale that is told. Can you take your glory or riches or knowledge with you into the land where all things are forgotten? Nay, mortal, leave these gifts to the ever-living gods, and choose rather *my* gifts—Love, Delight, heart-easing Mirth, that your little life may be sweet while it lasts; this is the one good for creatures of a day. Come, own me fairest, and pleasures beyond thought shall be yours, through the bride I promised you even now. For I myself have clothed her in such beauty that I am well nigh jealous to behold it; there is none like her among women, nor shall be to the end of Time; and with better reason than they know, do men call her the World's Desire."

Thus spoke she, the heavenly temptress; and Paris, overborne by visions of unknown bliss, forgot in that instant honour and plighted faith, and put the shining apple into her outstretched hand.

Sweetly laughed Aphrodite in her triumph, and at that sound Paris started like one awaking from a dream—to find himself alone. Gone were those celestial visitants, and looking round on the familiar, silent scene, he could have thought their coming a dream indeed, until a muffled sound of sobbing came to him out of the near pines, as it were the sough of the wind among their branches. Then, not enduring to look on her whom he had betrayed, he fled from the glen like a guilty thing pursued. For so it was with Paris then and thereafter, that he shunned the sight of pain more than the giving of it.

Now the next day and the next, he would fain have returned to Œnone, and made her what amends he could. But ever a voice within him whispered, "It is too late. The gods never recall their gifts. You have taken a bride at the hand of Aphrodite—hers you are and shall be to the end." There haunted him also that word of Hera's that he was king-born. He had long known that those whom he called father and mother were not his true parents, for the story of his finding was common talk; but happy in his free, simple life, he had never given a thought to the mystery of his birth. Now, however, he felt himself born to greater things, and nursed the secret hope that some high fortune was in store for him. Shunning the wooded heights, he led his flock day by day to the mountain's lower slopes, whence the eye had clearer prospect of the plain with its winding rivers, and the sparkling sea beyond, and towered Troy itself, that as yet he had never visited. Yonder, he would fancy, as he gazed at the spacious city, some splendid

lot awaited him ; yonder, perhaps, he was to meet the wondrous Unknown—the World's Desire !

It befell about this time that King Priam sent servants to Mount Ida to take his yearly toll of sheep and cattle from the hillmen. Now, the foster father of Paris owned one young bull, the finest beast of all the herds on Ida, which, when the King's servants saw, they claimed and drove off, although the old man pleaded hard, saying that, except a few sheep, it was all the livestock he had. So that night when Paris brought home his flock, he found the bull's stall empty and the old folks lamenting, and his heart grew hot within him at their tale.

" To-morrow," he said to them, " I will go down to Troy and stand before the King, and bid him right this wrong his greedy servants have done us in his name. For sure, being royal, he will think scorn to deal so meanly as to take our one beast, and he with a thousand of his own."

The old herdsman was well content that he should go, for he thought Paris could talk over any man, even the King, and next to his pride in Paris was his pride in the young bull. But his wife, who had the name of a wise woman among her neighbours, looked troubled, and prayed her foster-son to bide at home. " Troy town is no place for you," said she, " and evil will come of your errand, or I am the more deceived. Only last night I dreamed that I saw you feasting in the King's hall. The couch you lay on was all heaped over with rose-leaves, and behold, while you drank and laughed, a serpent crawled out of the rose-leaves and stung you on the breast—and at your shriek I

awoke. Here was a plain sign that some deadly peril lurks for you in Troy."

"Good mother," answered Paris, merrily, "have I not heard you say that a snake-bite in a dream signifies an arrow-wound? No fear of that in peaceful Troy, so think no more of your dream."

Next morning before daybreak he set out with a light heart for the city. It was the hour of full market when he entered its landward gate and passed through wide, straight streets into the market-place, where King Priam was sitting in a marble chair, giving judgments to his folk. Wisely and mildly dealt he with the suits they pleaded before him, healing disputes between neighbours, upholding the cause of the widow and the orphan, and meting equal justice to rich and poor. Seeing this, Paris was the more emboldened; he stepped forward in his turn and made request to have the bull restored, pleading his father's poverty and the injury he suffered by so heavy a toll on his small substance. And all who heard the young shepherd wondered at his discreet, fair-flowing speech, and his mien that was so princely, though modest as became his years.

But the King, looking fixedly on him, knew him—so like he was to the princes, his brothers—and eagerly questioned him of his name and parentage. Then Paris told all his story, and being asked further, what man it was that brought him a babe to the herdsmen, answered, they knew not his name, but he was one of the King's household. When Priam heard that, he rose up and bade Paris follow him into the palace; and taking him into a chamber apart, he sent for that

slave, now grown old and feeble, whom he had charged to make riddance of the fatal child. The slave no sooner saw Paris than he likewise knew him, and fell down at the King's feet, confessing his disobedience. But Priam pardoned him with right good will, for his heart yearned over his son, seeing how goodly and gracious a youth he was become, and in his gladness he recked no more of the soothsayers' prophecy concerning him. So that day all Troy kept high festival, because the dead was alive again and the lost was found.

Queen Hecuba received her son with tears of joy, and a loving welcome he had from all his brothers and sisters, except one, who greeted him in strange sort. Cassandra was the name of this princess; in earliest girlhood she had chosen to become Apollo's priestess, and vowed herself to his service for ever, and the god in recompense had endued her with the gift of prophecy. But before she had dwelt long in his holy temple, an earthly love made her false to her sacred vows; she was now dwelling again under her father's roof, and soon, it was said, would be married to the son of a neighbour king, who had wooed and won her by stealth. Cassandra came into the hall when all the rest were already gathered at the feast the King made in his long-lost son's honour; and the instant that she caught sight of Paris, where he sat on Priam's right hand, she threw up her white arms and reeled backward, crying out in a frenzy, "The firebrand! Trample out the firebrand! See, see, it sets alight our purple hangings—the blaze leaps to the rafters—they kindle too—now all is one flame! All Troy is burning, burning! O, O, all Troy's on fire!" And

with a shriek that curdled the blood to hear, she fell down in a swoon.

Then did Priam and Hecuba tremble and turn pale, bethinking themselves of the prophecy; yet on the morrow both were ready to make light of it, for the beauty of Paris and his winning ways subdued their hearts to extravagant fondness. Haggard with weeping, Cassandra sought the King alone, and implored him to send her new-found brother out of the land; "I cannot look on him," she said, "but straightway a fire dances before me and a shout of armed men rings in mine ears. O father, banish him hence! I feel—I know, by the god-given power within me, that if he bides here he will bring destruction on us all." But Priam would not heed her, for her mood had been very strange of late; and as for her vision of the firebrand, he thought that she had somehow heard the tale of Hecuba's dream and its interpretation—although he had commanded the soothsayers to keep it secret—and that had wrought her distempered mind to this dread and horror of Paris. Therefore he gently chid his daughter, bidding her beware of yielding to unwholesome fantasies, perilous alike to health and wits. Then Cassandra wrung her hands and cried, "Behold, the curse is come upon me that Apollo spoke when he knew me faithless. For he appeared to me in the temple and said, *Though I cannot take away a gift once given, I will make mine fruitless unto thee, and it shall prove thy bane. Still shalt thou foresee what is to come, but henceforth no man shall believe thy prophecies.*"

Now for a time all went merrily in Troy, and Paris

increased daily in favour with all his kindred, except the Seer-maiden, who scarce endured the sight of him. King Priam had sent back the bull to his foster-parents, and therewith such rich rewards for their kindness to the foundling that they could live at ease all the rest of their days. But Paris had no mind to revisit that lowly home, and the herdsman's wife looked for him long in vain. At last she said, "The lad I nursed in my bosom has forgotten me—ay, and more than me. It is borne upon my mind that another heart aches for him on Ida, with a bitterer pang than mine."

"That may be," said her husband, "for lads will be lads, and every maid on the mountain had a smile for our Paris. But never fret yourself, good wife; though he is a prince now and has other things to think of, he will come back to us one of these days."

"In an ill day for him, then," said she, "for I will tell you another thought that sticks in my mind—I shall see him next with the deathwound in his breast that my dream foreboded."

It chanced, soon after this, that a Phœnician trader came in his ship to Troy, bringing jewels and costly stuffs for sale, and Paris was by when he showed his choicest wares to Queen Hecuba and her daughters. Among them was a girdle of rare device, studded with sapphires, which the trader vowed had not its match in the world, except one that he had sold to a queen, who was well worthy of such a masterpiece, being accounted the fairest woman under the sun.

"What may be her name?" asked Paris, eagerly.

"She is called Helen," replied the trader, "but the

bards of her country have given her the name of *World's Desire*. They say she chose her husband among fifty suitors, all kings or sons of kings; he is King Menelaus of Sparta, in the land of Greece."

Paris needed no more to assure him that this Helen must be the peerless bride promised him by Aphrodite; the trader's report made him long to behold her, and surely, he thought, the goddess herself had sent him tidings of her name and habitation so that he might go in quest of her. After pondering long, he went to King Priam and prayed leave to voyage with the trader as far as the great harbour town of Sidon, whither he was next bound, and thence to journey home by land, seeing men and cities. For even as a shepherd, he said, he had longed for a sight of the wonders in far countries; and now he was come to high estate, it irked him all the more to be so ignorant of the great world, that had ever been the school of princes and heroes.

Priam was very loth to part with his now best-beloved son, but, being still more loth to cross him in anything, consented; he gave him a retinue befitting a prince, and great store of gold, and offered up sacrifices to all the gods of Troy for his prosperous voyaging, when the ship set sail.

Prosperous, in truth, was the voyage, but it was not to Sidon, for Paris had secretly hired the Phœnician to carry him straight to Sparta. And being come to the city of Menelaus, he made himself known to that King as Priam's son, journeying through Greece to pay vows of thanksgiving at holy Delphi, which is the chiefest seat and sanctuary of Apollo.

King Menelaus made the Trojan prince right welcome, and soon conceived such friendship for him that he took all means to prolong his sojourn, giving nightly feasts in his honour, and entertaining him by day with great huntings of the hart and the wild boar. Three se'nnights had passed in this manner when a business that brooked no delay called the hospitable king overseas to the Isle of Crete ; but since he would not be absent long, he urged his guest to await his return.

"My Queen," said he, "will play the hostess to you meanwhile, and I have charged her, as she loves me, to see you lack nothing our house can afford for your ease and pleasure."

Paris made a feint of refusal, under plea of desiring to set forward at once to Delphi, but at last he yielded, with joy in his heart. For from the first hour he saw Queen Helen, he knew that he must win her or die ; she was his star, fairer than the thousands that gemmed Night's kirtle—and hitherto she had seemed remote as they. It was as though, when he came into her presence, an invisible barrier rose about her, holding him aloof. Not that she failed in gentle courtesy to the stranger within her gates ; but whether at the banquet, or when, seated beside the hearth of an evening, she plied her ivory distaff, listening to the talk between Menelaus and his guest, the Queen was ever as one whose thoughts are far away, spoke seldom, nor so much as glanced at Paris. But now, he promised himself, all this should be altered ; he saw the hand of Aphrodite in the seeming chance that took Menelaus from home, "and it shall go hard," he thought, "but I will profit by this luck the goddess

sends me. With her to aid, and sweet Helen left unguarded, what may I not achieve?"

Thus did Paris, glorying in his heart, set his feet upon the road that lay plain and smooth before him, and little recked whither it might lead at the last.

II

After scarce a month's absence, King Menelaus came home again, nothing doubting that his wife would greet him on the threshold, and his Trojan guest be waiting to carouse and hunt with him as before. But dreary silence in the palace, and the pale, dismayed faces of his household, heralded the news that had to be told him—news that at first he angrily refused to believe. His Queen had stolen away with the Trojan stranger, three nights ago; they had been seen by certain fishermen to embark at dawn upon his ship, which lay in readiness off a lonely headland and at once stood out to sea with oar and sail.

When Menelaus, who was for a while like a man stunned, at length grasped the truth of these tidings, his grief and fury were dreadful to behold. No lioness robbed of her whelps could rage more terribly than he. Now he would give command to launch all his ships in chase of the runaways; anon, recollecting that by now they had gained three days' start on their unknown course, he would revoke that order, and fall to threatening and upbraiding his whole household because they had not suspected and hindered the treason afoot. An old nurse, hoping to soften the king's mood, brought in to him the only child of his

marriage, a darling little maid of two years old; but he turned away with a groan, and fiercely bade her keep the brat that was too like its traitress mother out of his sight, lest he did it a mischief.

In the height of his distress came the elder brother of Menelaus to visit him, with a great train, having heard what had befallen. This brother, Agamemnon by name, was likewise a king, ruling the land of Argos, that marches with Sparta on the eastward, and holding lordship over the princes of many cities besides. And here let it be told how both these two brothers came to be kings. Agamemnon inherited the sceptre of their father, Atreus; and at that time there was a king in Sparta called Tyndareus. Now Helen was the daughter of Tyndareus; who, when all the princes of Greece desired to wed the incomparable maiden, told them she should make her own choice among them, if they for their part would be bound by a certain condition. This was, that whomsoever she might choose, all the rest should swear to maintain his rights over her, and fight in that cause, if ever need arose. In this manner Tyndareus provided against the twofold danger he foresaw, of himself offending the other suitors if he preferred any one of them, and of their making war against Helen's husband out of revenge. All the suitors took the solemn oath he required of them; and Helen's choice fell on Menelaus, the least in rank and renown, but in person the goodliest. Not long after, the old Tyndareus died, and because he had no son living, bequeathed his kingdom to Menelaus. He left, however, one other daughter, called Clytemnestra, whom—as it was said, against

her will—Agamemnon had taken to wife when he found himself rejected by her sister. Certain at least it was that Clytemnestra was betrothed to another when the powerful King of Argos demanded her in marriage; but willing or unwilling, she had made him a loyal wife and governed her great household well. Thus, then, it came to pass that the two sons of Atreus ruled neighbour countries, and were the husbands of two sisters.

And so, too, it befell, when the anguish of Menelaus had a little abated under his brother's kindly comforting, that he saw a way to recover Helen even from distant and well-walled Troy, if, as he doubted not, Paris had carried her thither. Forthwith he reminded Agamemnon of the covenant made with her suitors, and begged him, as his elder, and chief among Greek princes, to call the rest to war against the Trojans. But Agamemnon was troubled at the request, and had much to urge against it. First he said, if a wife proved so fickle and so false, a man was well rid of her—the treacherous wanton was not worth another thought. Menelaus answered that he could never rest until he had dealt her, and Paris also, the doom such traitors merited, for it concerned his honour to be avenged on them both. "But not to be avenged on the king and folk of Troy," replied his brother, "unless indeed they aid and abet these evildoers, which is yet to be seen. Moreover, if we proclaim war against them, we publish to the whole world the shame that is fallen on our house. Let us rather send a trusty herald to Troy, as privately as may be, to see if Helen be there, and if she is, to bid King Priam surrender her straightway, on pain of war with all the Greeks."

Menelaus was forced to consent to this, but loud and long he protested that it was mere throwing away of time and labour, since Helen, for all her wickedness, was a prize that the Trojans and all men else with eyes to see, would keep at any hazard. And it seemed he was right; for the herald brought back word that Helen was indeed at Troy, and married to Paris, nor had King Priam vouchsafed any answer but this, that he was ready to protect *his dear daughter* against all the blusterers in Greece.

That taunt stung Agamemnon's pride to the quick; yet still he would fain have turned Menelaus from his purpose, so much his heart misgave him at the thought of leading the Greek host over the pathless deep to fight in a far country—and all for a worthless woman's sake. Had not his oath bound him, even the great love he bore his brother would hardly have won him to undertake that enterprise. But bound he was; and so Menelaus had his way at last, and the summons went forth to all those who were his sworn champions at need, to gather with their vassals and ships of war at the seaport of Aulis.

East and west and south and north fared the heralds of the brother kings on their errand, and everywhere they found the Greek princes as unwilling for the war as Agamemnon. For some were now past their prime, and most had wife and children, and to all it seemed a hard thing that they must leave home and kingdom to brave the perils of the sea and of foreign war, in another's man's quarrel. Nevertheless, none durst refuse, knowing that the high gods visit the oathbreaker with their heaviest plagues.

It were long to tell the names and lineage of all the chieftains who mustered at the trysting-place, and here we will speak only of those who played the greatest part in the coming war. From the ancient city of Argos came Diomed, good at need, who held sway there under Agamemnon's suzerainty. From Ithaca in the west came Odysseus, son of Laertes; lord of a barren isle, he brought no great following; but none was more powerful in the council of the princes, by reason of his subtle wit and ever-ready tongue. Not less revered for wisdom, which in him was the fruit of long experience, was Nestor, king of sandy Pylos, whose life had been prolonged through three generations of men. Many a tale could he tell of heroes, once his comrades, whose children's children now bore arms; yet his eye was not dimmed nor the warlike spirit in him abated, and he thought scorn to bide at home, but sailed to Aulis with his valiant sons. But the sons of two renowned kings whom age had enfeebled came in their fathers' stead, namely Ajax, son of Telamon, and Achilles, son of Peleus. No warrior in all the host could compare with these two princes in strength or stature; the towering bulk of Ajax drew all eyes when he walked abroad; but when the young Achilles first appeared, word flew through the camp that some god was come among them. And indeed, though mortal, he came of immortal race; for the mother that bore him was Thetis the Sea-Fairy, whom Peleus won for his bride by the favour of high Zeus. When Achilles was born, Thetis would have made her babe immortal also, by passing him through fire; but Peleus in great fear snatched him

from her, not knowing what she did; and because he broke that sacred spell, Thetis fled to the sea-deeps again, never more to house with men. So Achilles had his rearing in the mountain cave of Chiron, the wise Centaur, teacher of many a hero; until Peleus, moved by a prophecy that one of his blood should overthrow Troy, sent for the youth to lead his vassals in the war now toward.

Now while the Greek host lay at Aulis, making ready to embark, a thing befell that was the beginning of many sorrows. Hunting in the near woodlands one day, King Agamemnon roused a hare and chased her to the border of a grove, wherein stood an altar. There, out of the bracken, started up a tall peasant girl, and barred his way, saying to him "I forbid thee, King, to slay the hare; for she is heavy with young, and she has taken sanctuary at yonder altar, that belongs to Artemis, Lady of the Wild Things."

But in his eagerness, Agamemnon thrust her aside, and slew the hare with his arrow as she cowered by the altar-stone. Then he turned to bid his huntsmen seize that insolent stranger; but she had disappeared among the trees of the grove and they searched the place for her in vain. For she was great Artemis herself, who loves the helpless, innocent creatures of Earth, and abhors all such as destroy them wantonly.

On the morrow, all things being now ready, the Greek fleet was in act to sail, when suddenly so furious a wind blew landward that not a ship could leave harbour; and that tempest raged day after day, and week after week; until the storm-stayed host in their discouragement clamoured to be led home again,

since the gods plainly willed that they should never see Troy town.

Then did their captains inquire of Calchas, the wise seer that was to voyage along with them, what offended Power had sent these contrary gales, and for what cause? And in full council of the princes, he declared the wrath of Artemis against their general, Agamemnon, and how it would not cease from him until he made atonement for the slaughter of her suppliant, the hare. But what that atonement must be, Calchas would not reveal until Agamemnon and all present had sworn to hold him blameless and keep him scathless, when they heard it. Then, covering his face with a corner of his mantle, he said in tremulous tones: "Innocent blood for the innocent blood—the fruit of a man's body for the sin of his soul—this law is ancient in heaven. Therefore, O King Agamemnon, Artemis requires of thee thy first-born daughter's life, whom thine own hands must slay for a sacrifice upon her altar. But if thou wilt not, then disband this host thou hast gathered together; for not a man of them shall pass hence to Troy, though they tarry till their beards be grey."

Awe and horror held the council mute while the seer uttered these words; when he ceased, the sons of Atreus sprang up and dashed their sceptres on the ground, crying as with one voice that they would forfeit revenge, honour, nay, life itself, rather than consent to such a deed. Of the two, Menelaus was loudest in protestation: "My ships," he exclaimed, "shall rot upon this shore—their crews and I perish here of cold and hunger—before I will see my noble

brother become for my sake the murderer of his child!"

The sound of that dreadful name goaded the stricken father past endurance; he rushed from the council to hide himself in his tent, whither Menelaus hastily followed.

That day, and many hours of that night, Agamemnon paced to and fro like a caged lion, refusing meat or drink, his proud soul racked with humiliation and despair. What visions of glory and triumph had risen before him as he surveyed the mighty armament at his command—how soon that gallant sight had quelled his earlier misgivings! And now—must those hopes perish? Must the Trojans exult, and the whole world be set laughing at the tale of the king who mustered a thousand ships, only to send them home again? *Coward*, they would call him. Ay, the name of Agamemnon would become a byword among men for craven-heartedness, for folly and failure, unless—*unless!* He shuddered at the thought that came to him then, but it would not be driven away; and before morning dawned he could face it calmly, though it was the thought of yielding Artemis her victim.

That was the work of Odysseus. Well skilled to read the hearts of men, he knew the sons of Atreus infirm of purpose, stubborn if thwarted, but easily led by any who would flatter their pride; he saw the mischief that might ensue to all Greece did they hold their resolve to disband the host, and one girl's life seemed to him but a small thing in comparison. Biding his time until Agamemnon's passion should have spent itself, he came to the king's tent late in

the night and craved speech with him on a matter deeply importing the general weal. Then, with all the craft he was master of, Odysseus set forth the shame and loss that must befall the princes who at so much labour and cost had manned the greatest fleet ever seen in Greece, if they were forced to turn back on the very threshold of their enterprise; the bitter grudge they must thenceforth bear the house of Atreus; above all, the fatal consequences that might flow from their resentment. "By all I can hear," he said, "the chiefs of our host are in a dangerous mood. Even to me, your known friend, they let fall hints of seeking nearer home the conquest and plunder you promised them at Troy; and much I fear lest the strength of their array tempt them to such reprisals on you and your kingdom as will plunge all Greece into long and bloody war."

"Odysseus, my friend," said Agamemnon, slowly, "you do not tell me all this without some purport in view. If your wisdom has found any remedy for the evils that beset me, say on."

"Give me patient hearing, then," replied Odysseus, "for the medicine that alone can cure them is a bitter one, and you will shrink but to hear it named. But why should I name it—why tell you the thing your own noble heart, I know, bids you do for the common good? This much, then, I will say; it is expedient that one maiden die for her race; it is a king's part to be a father to his people, cherishing them no less than his own offspring. King of Argos, be true to your royal nature! Let your people rise up and call you blessed, let this great host be proud to follow you

to the death, because you spared not the most precious thing you had, to save Greece ! "

With these words Odysseus rose up and went out quickly ; and going to old Nestor's tent, where some of the princes held late and anxious converse—for few slept that night—he bade them hope good tidings on the morrow, since he was much deceived if Agamemnon were not already turned from his purpose of abandoning the war.

Even so it was ; next morning all were summoned early to council, and Agamemnon, with a mournful dignity, proclaimed his submission to the will of Artemis. The sacrifice required of him, he said, he would perform, cost him what grief it might, out of zeal for the common welfare of Greece. And scarcely had he said this, when the tempestuous east wind died away, and the raging sea was still. Then all the host shouted for gladness, and fain would have sailed that very hour ; but needs must they wait her coming, whose death was the appointed price of their seafaring.

Now Agamemnon knew that Clytemnestra his wife, being of a resolute spirit, would defy his messengers if she learned their true errand ; therefore by advice of Odysseus, he sent for his daughter under pretext of wedding her to Achilles, flower of warriors, as a sure pledge of alliance. So the maiden, who was fifteen summers old, and named Iphigeneia, was brought to the camp decked in bridal array, a sight so fair and piteous that none of all that warrior multitude looked on it unmoved. Stern, bearded chiefs, who many a time had sat at Agamemnon's feasts when the young princess filled her father's wine-cup and chanted in

her fresh voice the hymn that hallows the revel, turned away their faces as she passed by, lest she should see their tears. But dry-eyed the father met his heart's darling, steeling himself for the thing that he must do, and she must hear of—from his own lips. Ah, heavier task than that deed itself was the undeceiving of the maiden lured by a maiden's tenderest hopes to her doom!

But meanwhile Achilles knew nothing of his feigned betrothal to one whom he had never seen; and some report that when it came to his ears, he would have braved the wrath of Greeks and of goddess to rescue Iphigeneia, could he have gained her consent. For having bribed the princess's guards, he visited her that night and told her he was Achilles, come to save her, and make her his bride in right earnest that very hour, would she but go with him to his tents; where the good swords of his clansmen should defend their chieftain's wife against the whole Greek army, if king or seer dared claim her then. But she gently answered him, she could not purchase life by the ruin of her country's cause; neither beseemed it a weak, unlessoned girl to question the decree of her father and king; but rather, since death must come soon or late, to die as she had lived, in obedience to him and to the gods. And seeing her thus steadfast, Achilles marvelled, and went away sorrowful.

But others say, he knew neither the fraud of Odysseus, nor Iphigeneia's coming to Aulis, until too late; for Agamemnon and his subtle counsellor feared the youth's impetuous spirit, that loathed and scorned a lie; so they contrived to send him hunting

with certain companions who should delay his return, under colour of pursuing their sport, until after the day of sacrifice.

When that day dawned in angry, blood-red light, the assembled Greeks saw the royal virgin led to her doom, unfaltering, uncomplaining, as became the daughter of a great heroic line. Through the hushed ranks of spearmen and bowmen she passed, to where kings and priests waited in circle around a new-built altar; there, while Calchas prayed aloud, she stood in her meek loveliness, looking with tear-dimmed eyes on those familiar faces—silently, wistfully, as a picture looks. Then, at a sign from Calchas, the ministers of the goddess bound the passive victim, swathing her long veil close about her face, and with all reverence lifted her to the altar-slab. . . . From sight of that which followed, all covered their eyes; even he that, shuddering, raised the sacrificial knife did it with averted head, and hand guided by another. Moments passed, and seemed long like hours, ere any durst look again at the altar and its burden; but suddenly a great shout broke from Calchas—"A miracle! Behold a miracle! See, see what Artemis hath wrought, and adore her unspeakable mercy!"

In breathless wonder, kings and commons stared at the shape that lay on the encrimsoned altar. It was not the body of a maiden—but of a slender, dappled fawn. Artemis, as it seemed, had saved the life she claimed, and provided herself another sacrifice; but of the vanished Iphigeneia's fate, no sign or token could be found, neither was it revealed to Calchas, or to any man, until many years after.

And now the Greeks might hoist sail at last; sped by a favourable breeze they came straight to the Asian coast; but for lack of a guide they landed at first too far southward, near a city they mistook for Troy. The king of that country, seeing a great host come against him, went forth with all his men to give them battle; at the first onset he fell wounded by the spear of Achilles, who took him prisoner, asking him his name. And the king said, "I am Telephus of Mysia, a son of Heracles." At that, Achilles shouted with a great shout to the Greeks to stay the fight, for this land and people were none of Priam's. So they made their peace with the King of Mysia and departed; and it grieved Achilles much that he had wounded a son of Heracles, that mighty Helper of men, who now was with the gods above. After this, the fleet touched at certain islands, and having learned their true course, came at last to the Trojan shore.

News of their approach had reached King Priam, and they found all his warriors drawn up along the beach to dispute their landing; nevertheless they rowed the ships close in, and arming in haste were ready to spring ashore, when a voice out of the waves cried on the name of Achilles, warning him that the first Greek whose foot touched Trojan ground must die the self-same hour. It was the voice of Thetis, who like all the sea-people had knowledge of things to come, and never ceased to watch over Achilles with a mother's love. Then all the Greeks hung back, even the dauntless son of Peleus; for to die now was to lose not life alone, but victory and fame. But one there was to whom his country's glory was dearer

than his own; the chieftain Protesilaus leaped suddenly overboard, and shouting his war-cry flung himself upon the Trojan spears. Instantly the whole Greek host likewise dashed to land; and before their furious onset the Trojans broke and fled. The invaders pursued them almost to Troy walls, killing many by the way; but when reinforcements were seen issuing from the city gate, old Nestor bade the chiefs sound a retreat, nor risk a pitched battle so far from their ships, which meanwhile lay unguarded, an easy prey for Trojan skirmishers. The younger warriors were for storming the town then and there; but the counsel of Nestor prevailed with the sons of Atreus. So the Greeks drew back unmolested to the shore; there they made their encampment, stretching in front of the long line of ships, and there they buried Protesilaus, raising a great mound over his grave, for an everlasting remembrance. Thus began the Siege of Troy.

But in those far-off days, all that we call siege-craft was yet unknown. No engines of battery, no undermining of walls or blockading by counterwalls or earthworks then threatened a beleaguered town. There were only two means of taking a fortified place —to fight your way in, or to starve the garrison into surrender. And the Greeks soon learned that they must not hope to reduce Troy by famine. Not only had Priam—as their spies reported—laid up vast stores of corn, oil and wine on the first rumour of the war, but the circuit of Troy's wall was too great for even their numbers to besiege closely. Were they to spread their camp right round the city, they could not guard it at all points from sallies of the besieged.

Succours and supplies, therefore, could still reach the Trojans from inland; but the Greeks could, and did, cut them off from the coast and from the sea-borne trade that brought them the chief part of their wealth. Also, Achilles and his clansmen made forays far and wide in Priam's country and in all the regions round about, laying waste both fields and towns, and carrying off captives, flocks, herds and all manner of spoil; whereby the Trojan allies were impoverished, and the Greek host maintained in plenty.

Meanwhile the rest of the commanders led many assaults upon Troy town; but always they were beaten back with loss, so valiantly its folk defended it, fighting both on the walls and in sorties from the gates. Of all the princes that led them, the Greeks most dreaded Hector, Priam's eldest born, a lion in daring and in strength, whom they named the Bulwark of Troy.

After this manner the war went on, with varying fortune to besiegers and besieged, until nine summers and nine winters had slipped away.

Now in the tenth year fell out that bitter quarrel between Achilles and King Agamemnon, sung in the greatest of all poems. Who knows not the story that lives for all time in the strong-winged verse of Homer? Briefly as I may, I set down what has been re-told in so many tongues, from age to age.

There came to the Greek camp one day a reverend old man, priest of Phœbus Apollo, craving to have his daughter restored to him, who had been captured in a raid and given to Agamemnon as his tithe of the spoil. But the King haughtily repulsed him; and he

went away along the sea-beach, muttering prayers to his god, not unheard. For straightway a pestilence smote the Greek host, which Calchas the Seer declared to be Apollo's vengeance on the oppressors of his priest. Thereupon Agamemnon sent back the damsel to her home, but, heaping wrong on wrong, he seized Briseis, the fairest captive of Achilles, to make good his loss. For that insult done him, Achilles withdrew himself from council and fight, and abode in his tent; nor would be pacified when the King, humbled by reverses in battle, offered him Briseis again, and untold treasure besides. At last his loved comrade Patroclus gained his leave to succour the Greeks, whom Hector had routed and pursued even to their ships. Great glory won Patroclus that day, driving back the Trojans to their walls and well-nigh breaking into the town; but heedless of his friend's parting charge, he dared combat with great Hector's self, and fell by his spear. With that stroke, Hector wrought doom to himself, and for his house an irredeemable woe; for like an avenging god Achilles rushed to battle, and after a slaughter grim and great he encountered Hector singly, without the city-gate called Scaean, and there slew him under the eyes of his agéd father and mother, and his kindred, that watched upon the wall. Nor did this glut the wrath of Thetis' son; in the frenzy of that hour he tied the corse to his chariot-wheels, and dragged it through the bloody dust of the battle-field, to lie unburied, a prey to dogs and vultures, near the mounded sepulchre of Patroclus. But dear to the gods was noble Hector, who honoured them meetly all his days; and they preserved his body

from corruption, neither suffered beast or bird to touch it. And when Greeks and Trojans had mourned certain days, these for Hector, those for Patroclus, Hermes, the Herald, taking mortal shape, guided old Priam by night to Achilles' tent, to beg the body of his son. The god himself drove the sleek mules of Priam's car, and by his power the eyes of the Greek sentinels were holden, as they passed through the camp.

Now when Achilles saw that white-haired king sink prostrate at his feet, and heard him falter out a plea for mercy in the name of his own father Peleus, who yet might know such a grief as this; when he felt the old man's tears fall on the hand so lately reddened with his first-born's blood—his own tears began to flow. For the thought of all the sorrow there is under the sun and the bitter changes and chances that darken man's brief life, knocked upon his heart. Gently he raised up Priam, gently led him to a seat, and for a little space those two wept together, as father and son may weep a common loss. But when the old king would have urged his request, Achilles checked him imperiously, not trusting himself to hear the slayer of Patroclus so much as named, without some access of rage; then he spoke apart to his henchmen, and they went forth and reverently took up dead Hector, and having wrapped about him the precious webs of sea-purple that Priam had brought for his ransom, they laid him in the car. As for the rest of the ransom, chosen by Priam among his costliest treasures, Achilles would not refuse it, out of his great courtesy; and saying he would offer those gifts at

the tomb of Patroclus, he thereby marked his reverence for the giver. And because he saw that the old man was spent with grief and weariness, he made him lie down to sleep on a couch prepared apart; so Priam slept in peace under guard of that noble foe. But when the stars paled their fires, he mounted his car and drove softly homeward; for Achilles had warned him that the chiefs would not let such a hostage as the King of Troy escape them, if they knew he was in their midst.

Now he granted Priam a truce of eleven full days, wherein to bury his son with sacrifices and solemn feasts and all wonted honours of the dead; so during that time the Trojans mourned for Hector with a great mourning.

Thus far has divine Homer told the tale, and where he closed his lay begins the last scene of all; from the death of Hector, the tide of Troy's fortunes ebbed ever lower, until the royal city paid at last the price of her rulers' guilt—until the smoke of her burning had gone up to heaven as from a funeral pyre, kindled for all his race by the Fire-brand born of Hecuba.

CHAPTER I

Of the helpers that came to King Priam

DURING nine days of the truce their foes had granted, the Trojans busied themselves in preparing funeral honours worthy of him who was their best and bravest. Day by day the men folk toiled on the steeps of woody Ida, hewing down the tallest pines, which were dragged to the city by endless trains of mules and oxen, and

built into a huge foursquare pyre without the landward gate. Meantime all Troy resounded with the wailing of the women for their great prince's fall, and the palace courts rang night and day with the shrill sound of dirges chanted to the flute. But in the stately room of painted cedarwood that had been Hector's marriage-chamber, old Priam sat like a graven image by his son's bier; the royal purple mantle, torn and besmirched with ashes of the hearth in the first transports of sorrow, drawn over his bowed head; and in that presence, the other watchers hushed their clamorous grief. Queen Hecuba was there with her daughters, and Hector's gentle wife, Andromache, and the wives of his brethren; all robed in black, their long hair hanging rent and dishevelled after the custom of mourners. And while they kept vigil, now one, now another would croon her lament over the departed, calling to remembrance his gracious ways and all that he had been to her as brother, or husband, or son. But none of the Trojan dames made tenderer moan for him than the stranger within their gates whose ill-starred beauty was the cause of all this woe; Helen, more lovely in her tears, took up the theme last of all, and with sweet, faltering accents praised the generous heart that had welcomed her as a sister—the noble courtesy that forbore even a reproachful look, when others spared not to chide her openly for bringing war on Troy.

On the tenth morn of the truce, dead Hector was carried out to his burning; they laid him on the summit of the lofty pyre, and all about him princes and people heaped their offerings; spices and nard

and precious balsams ; jars of sweet oil and of honey ; raiment of needlework and tapestries of rare device ; and over his feet, like a lustrous coverlet, were spread the tresses that maids and matrons had shorn off for a last tribute to the well-beloved of his folk. Priam himself held the torch to the pyre ; and all the people watched in solemn silence while the flames roared aloft, fanned by a breeze from the sea, burning many-hued with the richness of pine-sap, of unguents and frankincense. All day the mighty pyre blazed in the sunlight, all night its red glare lit the sky ; next dawn, its sinking embers were quenched with streams of wine and careful hands gathered the bones of Hector in a golden coffer. Then his kinsmen shrouded the coffer in veils of broidered purple and laid it in the grave prepared, with the arms and jewelled ornaments of the dead.

Now while they heaped a mound above the grave, the Trojans descried a cloud of dust, wherein spear-heads glinted, scudding over the plain from the northward ; and fear took them that the Greeks had broken the truce and made circuit of the city to fall on them unawares. But as the cloud rolled nearer with thunder of horse-hoofs, a bugle horn blew piercing notes ; and Priam cried, " I should know that blast ! It is the war-call of the Amazons, against whom I fought with our Phrygian allies in my youth. Alas, what make they here ? "

Even as he spoke, a long troop of riders came full in view, mounted on small, nimble horses, arrayed in caps and vests of fur, and armed with javelins, bows and battle-axes. And the Trojans stared amazedly on these warriors, for they were women all. Right

on they came, but suddenly drew rein and halted, while their leader, a slender, black-haired girl, advanced alone, flinging down her weapons in sign of amity. "Which is the King of Troy?" she cried in a ringing voice, and looked about her like one that is more used to command than entreat reply. At that, Priam stepped forward, beckoning with his hand, and asked her what she would with him.

"King," said the girl, "I am Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, come with these my warriors to help you against the Greeks, our mortal enemies. It cannot be unknown to you what cause we have to hate that race of robbers. Was not Heracles a Greek, that spoiled our former queen, Hippolyta, of her royal girdle, to pleasure the king he served? Did not Theseus of Athens carry off her young sister by violence, and slay the flower of us in battle when we marched on his city to recover her? Now, therefore, we have journeyed from our homes by the Northern Sea to fight against your foes and ours."

When Priam heard that, he was glad, well knowing the prowess of that woman-tribe, and he offered them hospitality; but they would not be lodged in Troy; for it is a law of the Amazons to dwell apart from men and have no dealings with them, save of necessity. Nay, though they take husbands among neighbouring tribes that their race may continue, they will not suffer them to come into the Amazon country, but visit them in their own; and all male children born to them they send away to the fathers, but the girls they train up in the ways of warriors. So the Trojans built a camp for these strange allies outside the walls,

and furnished it with good store of all things needful both for them and their horses.

Then, the days of truce being ended, the Greeks marched yet again to assault the city, trusting to make short work now Hector, its prop and defence, was fallen. But to their no small wonder, they saw the whole Trojan array sally boldly forth to give them battle. Each marshalled in three divisions, the two armies were drawn up front to front, the chiefs of either side, and their wealthier vassals, mounted on chariots and conspicuous in shining armour; the mixed multitude of their followers on foot, diversely armed with spears, slings or bows. And the Greeks waxed yet more confident of victory as they marked how sorely the Trojan battalions had been thinned by that day of slaughter wherewith Achilles avenged his Patroclus.

But scarcely was the battle joined, when the left wing of the Greeks was assailed in flank by a sudden charge of horse and an arrow-shower that darkened the air. It was as if some barbarian horde had sprung out of the ground, or dropped from the sky upon them, so lightning-swift was the onset of the new foes; so uncouth their aspect, and their fierce, shrill cries, like the clamouring of sea-gulls. In the first shock of encounter the Greeks saw but a confused vision of strangely-garbed horsemen, with long locks streaming, that fought like things possessed; charging, turning, wheeling, as though of one piece with the small, fiery beasts they bestrode; letting fly their arrows in clouds, dealing deadly strokes with their bright axes, or stabbing at men's faces with their

javelins. Thus harassed, and unmanned by a panic terror of these inexplicable beings as perhaps other than human, the Greek ranks wavered, broke and fled. In vain Diomed and Odysseus, their leaders, strove to rally them by dint of threats and entreaties; in vain beat off the foe awhile, almost alone; both chiefs were soon disabled by arrow-wounds, and forced to turn their chariots in flight with the rest. Well was it for them that day, that their charioteers were skilful and their horses swift; else had they never won alive out of the surging flood of pursuers and pursued.

Now while the Amazons thus drove one Greek battalion off the field, the Trojans pressed hard on the other twain; and Agamemnon, commanding the midmost, saw his flank wellnigh hemmed in by the right wing of the enemy. "Hearken, Antilochus," he cried to Nestor's eldest son, "speed to our southward battle—there find Achilles, and bid him come amain, for Diomed and Odysseus are put to flight, and unless he succour us here, the day is lost." Then furiously drove young Antilochus through the mellay to where Achilles fought at the head of his clansmen; like corn before the sickle the Trojans were falling before the massy spear that none but he could wield. When the son of Peleus heard the message, he spoke never a word, but gave his charioteer the sign, and forthwith the noble horses he loved so well bore him like a thunderbolt through the fray to Agamemnon's side. Antilochus galloped after, and on their track came the flower of the great Myrmidon clan that Peleus ruled, doughty spearmen all. Then joyously

shouted the Greeks, and with one rush they bore back the struggling ranks of Troy the length of a javelin-cast. But old Nestor, glancing heedfully all about him, spied the Amazons returning at full speed, and cried aloud, "Halt, friends, halt and 'ware surprise! The horsemen that routed our comrades be upon us to rearward!" At that, Achilles wheeled about and dashed to the rear, with Antilochus and seven chieftains more; the Amazons rode close up, but when they saw the line of chariots fronting them, they drew off and halted at a distance, biding their time. For they fought after the barbarian manner, by brisk skirmishing and sudden onslaughts, and were too lightly horsed and accoutred to attack heavy-armed troops in open field, unless by ambush or surprise.

But when Achilles and the chiefs with him had seen these vanquishers of their comrades face to face, they held their peace awhile for very amazement; then he cried with a bitter laugh, "Was it from these ye fled, gallant Diomed, wise Odysseus? O cowards, hearts of deer, shame of the Greeks, have you run from *women?*"

Meanwhile by Nestor's counsel Agamemnon bade his host close their ranks and retire, still fronting the foe; since the rout of a third of their number had made it fruitless to persevere in the assault that day. Achilles was hardly persuaded to retreat, for he burned to wipe out the foul disgrace of his countrymen; but he yielded to the earnest admonishing of Nestor, whom he reverenced, and the pleading of Antilochus, whom he loved best of all men after Patroclus. Not less loth was Ajax, son of Telamon, than whom none

more stubbornly held his ground against the Trojan onset; like a wave-beaten rock he had stood in the forefront of the battle, his great shield planted rampart-wise before him, laying about him with his broadsword as a sturdy thresher plies his flail. Sullenly he obeyed Agamemnon's hest, and slowly retreated in the rear-guard; growling as he went, and casting many a grim look behind, like a lion that herdsmen can scarce drive off with their darts and firebrands from the carcase of the ox he has slain.

So the host withdrew to the camp, none molesting them; and all the way they went was strewn with the bodies of Greeks; for the Amazons give no quarter and hold no prisoners to ransom, but kill the wounded where they lie. Agamemnon bade take up these dead, and bring them to camp for burial, and so it was done; although Achilles would have had them left to dogs and vultures as cravens that deserved no better fate. But little moan was made for them, and neither cairn nor mound marked their unhonoured graves. As for those that escaped, shame and confusion of face was their portion when they learned from what manner of foes they had fled. But seeing them much discomfited and all the host in great dejection of mind, Nestor stood forth and made oration in these words :—

" King Agamemnon, princes, captains, and warriors all, give ear to an old man's counsel, that knew chances of war both foul and fair long ere any of you saw the light. If you will be guided by me, neither those who fled this day must be overmuch cast down, nor the rest bear them malice as having lost the field through

their faint-heartedness. For when by the will of Zeus a panic terror seizes on men in battle, even heroes, the seed of gods, do flee apace. Thus it fared of old with Amphiaraus, best of warriors and best of seers, what time he made one of the Seven Champions that beleaguered seven-gated Thebes. Sorely their emprise misliked him, for by clear omens he read the end thereof; but he went perforce, bound by a covenant made aforetime. And when the ruin he foreknew overtook all his company, and they fled headlong before the Thebans, that mighty hero fled likewise—yea, he had died by a spear-thrust in the back, but that Zeus, to spare his upright soul dishonour, caused the earth to open and swallow him. Thus, I say, it was with Amphiaraus, and with many another of his godlike generation—men these old eyes have seen, but their like none sees now, nor shall again. What marvel, then, if the men of to-day, weaklings by comparison, cannot abide in the hour of heaven-sent fear? Nay, let us think no more of this mischance, for another day shall make it good, when Zeus so wills; he it is that setteth up and pulleth down, making the valiant to quail and the timorous to wax lion-hearted; to-day he exalts the Trojans, but to-morrow he may humble them in their turn. For so he ever deals with mortals, lest they boast themselves victors and conquerors by their own strength, not ascribing him the glory."

Then said Achilles: "Much-honoured Nestor, sage and timely is the counsel you give us, now as always. Let us count past things as past—yet bear with me if I say that you have not probed the wound you would

heal. In my breast at least, this is what rankles—not that Greeks have fled, but that they fled a rabble of that puny breed who are the weaker, worser half of humankind."

At these words Ajax son of Telamon shook his great sides with laughing. "Achilles," he said, "it is well seen you are no woman's son, but born of a goddess, by the scorn you ever show for all women and their ways. I think you would not have chosen to mate with golden Helen herself; nay, I have heard you say as much, and that he who takes a wife takes black Care under his roof-tree. But let me tell you this for your comfort—if I guess right, better men than we have found their match in these same women-warriors we saw to-day. Heard you never of a tribe of such, who are called the Amazons?"

"Not I," answered Achilles, but several of the elder chiefs nodded their heads, and Nestor said, "I see, Ajax, whither your thoughts tend, and, my life upon it, you have hit the mark. But say on, for your father's son has the best right of all here to instruct us in this matter."

"It was indeed from my father," replied Ajax, "that I learned what I know of the Amazons. No skill of words have I, but I will make shift to tell the tale he has told me. But first let us visit the wounded Diomed and Odysseus in their tents, and let us take our sea-bath and supper on the beach as our wont is; for tales that delight a full man are small pleasure to a fasting."

Now Diomed and Odysseus were in more pain than danger from their arrow-wounds, thanks to the tendance

they had from the wise Machaon and his brother, physicians of the host and sons to the great Asclepius; the two chiefs were able to share the evening feast with the rest, and when all had well eaten and drunk, Ajax began his tale.

The Adventure of Heracles among the Amazons.

When Telamon espoused my lady mother, and held his marriage feast in our isle of Salamis, great Heracles came to him; not a bidden guest, for he had been wandering afar, but dearly welcome as a friend tried and true. Now he came seeking a comrade to make war with him on this very city we are beleaguering. For the King of Troy that then was, even Laomedon, Priam's father, had basely cozened Heracles of his due. This Laomedon, it seems, was a defrauder not of men only, but of gods; once upon a time, Apollo and Poseidon did offence to King Zeus, and their penance was, to become hirelings of a mortal for a year; so they came in the guise of labourers to Troy, and agreed with Laomedon to build a wall round about his city. But when it was built, he denied the two gods their wages, little dreaming who they were, and threatened them with death if they did not instantly quit his borders. Then the wrathful Poseidon made the sea overflow all Troy plain, and with the flood he sent a fearsome sea-beast, which devoured men and cattle. And an oracle declared that Troy should never be rid of that monster until the king's daughter were given to it for prey. But Heracles,

as he journeyed, came in the nick of time to Troy; Laomedon promised him whatsoever reward he might choose, to save the princess; and forthwith he slew the monster with his invincible bow. Heracles asked for reward two horses of the wondrous breed that the gods gave to Trojan kings of old; but Laomedon, filling up the measure of his iniquity, denied his promise yet again, and drove his helper away with insult.

All this Heracles told my father; "And now, Telamon," said he, "I am bound for Eastern lands once more, on the errand of King Eurystheus. With you and your men to aid, I had thought to land at Troy on my way and teach Laomedon the lesson he needs; but since I find you newly wedded, that must not be."

But for nothing in the world would Telamon forego an adventure in the company of glorious Heracles; he took leave of his bride, manned all his ships of war, and soon the two friends landed on this self-same spot where now we are encamped. Six ships' crews had they, and no more; but with these they overcame Laomedon and all his folk, burst a way through Troy wall, and slew the treacherous king on his own threshold. Then they sent home the ships, laden with spoil and captives, and Heracles prayed Telamon to return likewise; but he would not, being utterly purposed to share his friend's next quest. And that was, to fetch the girdle of the Queen of the Amazons.

For, as all men know, Heracles served his kinsman, King Eurystheus of Argos, twelve years, by ordinance of Fate; and in each year that king sent him on some

perilous quest; hoping to rid himself of a man he feared and hated, as the base and cowardly ever hate the noble in soul. Now the daughter of Eurystheus, hearing that the Amazon Queen wore the most splendid golden girdle in the world, begged her father to send Heracles to get it for her; so Eurystheus set him that task, being the ninth of those he laid upon him.

Long and toilsome was the road the two comrades now traversed; and when they came to the Amazon country, some of the warrior-women met them and bade them turn back; but Heracles by his noble mien and winning words prevailed with those sentinels to conduct him before their queen. And being brought to the great village in a forest where she dwelt, he made known his name and his comrade's to this queen, who was called Hippolyta. Rumour said she was a daughter of Ares, the War-god, and when the heroes looked on her they could well believe it, so fair and terrible was her aspect. Now she had heard the fame of Heracles, and often longed to behold him; so she was right fain of his coming and fell straightway to questioning him concerning his adventures and the marvels he had seen in wandering by land and sea. Heracles never loved to speak of his own mighty deeds, but for once he might not refuse; when the Queen had well feasted her guests they took place beside her at the hearth, and Heracles began the story of his travels, she listening eagerly as a child. Ay, Telamon is wont to say he will remember that scene to his latest hour; the long, low hall of rough-hewn timbers, all hung with bright weapons and spoils of

the chase; a great fire of beech-logs in the midst; the women guards standing silently round; and that strange Queen leaning from her deerskin couch, with shining eyes fixed on the great wanderer's face.

As for Heracles, he sat there merry and at ease, like one at home; that was ever his way, whether he housed with king or churl, kindly Greeks or the wildest races of earth. And he spoke haltingly at first, but kindled presently at the memory of wonders seen and dangers passed, so that to hear him tell of them was a pleasure gods might covet. At last, when they had sat long and late, he pleaded drowsiness; and the Queen said, "Sleep, then, here by the hearth, and to-morrow you shall tell me more." So the comrades slept in her hall, bedded soft and warm on piled skins of wolf and bear. On the morrow, Heracles avowed his errand to her, and boldly asked the girdle as a guest-gift; but the Queen only smiled and said, "We will talk of that when I have heard the rest of your adventures. Meanwhile, I go hunting, and you and your comrade shall come with me."

In this manner she put him off day by day, until she had heard all that ever he did. But before all was told, he had found such favour in her sight that she bestowed the girdle on him of her own free will. This she did secretly; for that girdle was a divine and sacred thing, the gift of Ares himself to his daughter, and the symbol of her queenship. It was also a most potent warcharm, and held in deepest reverence by the Amazons as the Luck of their race. So the Queen durst not let it be known that she had parted with it for love of a stranger; but coming late in the night

to Heracles where he lay sleeping, she bade him unclasp the precious zone—which she wore continually—with his own hands.

Now Telamon says that she asked and received of Heracles a token in return, but what it was he leaves out of his tale. Presently the Queen aroused him also, and with stealth and silence led the two comrades forth of her dwelling by a postern that opened on the forest; then she took farewell of both and charged them to make all speed out of the land, for the Amazons must believe that they had robbed her of the girdle while she slept.

"What, fair Queen," said Heracles, smiling, "and you neither woke nor cried a rescue? Will they credit such a tale as that on your bare word?"

"No," she said, looking at him strangely, "but they shall have a proof they cannot doubt. Farewell, my lord, since farewell it must be—nay, linger not another instant—go, go, and may all the gods of your far homeland have you in their keeping."

With that she was gone, and the comrades set out at their best speed, making due south by the guiding light of Orion, the Heavenly Huntsman. Three nights and three days they journeyed, snatching brief rest now and again in recesses of the woods; about noon of the third day they came out of the forest region upon a wide, grassy plain; and when they were midway across it, they heard a great hue and cry behind them. Looking back, they saw a bevy of riders advancing at the gallop, and knew that a band of the Amazons had somehow lighted on their track.

"How shall we do now?" quoth Telamon.

Heracles shaded his eyes with his hand and scanned, first the pursuers, next the plain on all sides. "We must e'en run for it," he answered; "away to the right I see a low building—some shrine or tomb, belike; there we can make a stand—here there is not so much as a tree-stump to set our backs against."

So saying, he began to run like any deer. Now Telamon, though he followed, had shame of this action; and when they had gained the building, which proved to be a small, ruined temple of stone, he panted out, "Little I thought ever to see the greatest of warriors run from a few score women." But Heracles laughed and said, "The greatest of warriors, were he not also the greatest of fools, would run from a few score angry bees, and trust me, yonder swarm hath stings far deadlier. For my part, could I outrun their tireless horses I would have fled outright; less shame I count it to fly women than to fight them; but I fear me these will give us no choice but to slay or be slain."

And that was a true word; for in another instant the Amazons were upon them, and of the fight that then began, Telamon, who bears the mark thereof to this day, saw never the like in his lifetime of warfare. The temple, being ruinous as I said, gave the comrades no better protection than that of a yet standing side-wall, which served to guard their rear; but the approach in front was difficult to riders because the sacred precinct was still partly fenced in by a stockade, and the ground about it was marshy and broken. The Amazons no sooner saw this than they leaped from their horses and rushed to the attack on foot,

uttering cries of rage scarce human. There were perhaps not twoscore of them, for they were but one of the many bands scouring the country in search of Heracles; and he, as all the world knows, was singly a match for fifty men in his god-given strength; yet now, with Telamon to aid, he was well-nigh overborne by the sheer fury of those assailants. It seemed they knew their arrows and light javelins would rebound harmless from his enchanted lion-skin and Telamon's broad shield, or maybe they were too frantic to take aim; at least they plied only their battle-axes, and did so to such purpose that the heroes, who at first merely strove to parry their blows, must soon fight for the dear life. Even then, Heracles, as I tell you, was sore bested; as for Telamon, an axe hurled at his head clove through helm and scalp and laid him stunned at his comrade's feet. Ah, then did the divine anger, that being kindled turns to flame the blood of those who are sprung from the Immortals, blaze forth in Heracles; then came one of those dread moments when he seemed no longer man, but a destroying god. Telamon knew that, as soon as his senses returned to him; for behold, Heracles and he were alone with the dead. Heracles had bound his wound, and was laving his face with water he had fetched in the broken helm. "They have fled, then?" he asked, raising himself and looking mistily round him.

"Not one of them," answered Heracles, with a sob; and sitting down, hid his face in his hands. . . .

Before the comrades left that spot, they laid the dead Amazons in one long grave beside the ruined

shrine, and their arms also; and though there was danger in tarrying, Heracles toiled until nightfall to raise an earthen barrow over the grave and set thereon a fallen pillar of the temple; for a memorial, as he said, to warriors the most fearless of all that ever he encountered. Now he had thought to catch two of the Amazons' horses for himself and Telamon; for, whether by training or instinct, they all stood like so many statues where their riders left them throughout the fight—yes, and until they saw the earth heaped over the slain; but then with shrill, mournful whinnyings the creatures formed in squadrons and galloped out of sight. So the comrades went their way on foot as before, and came each to his home at last, not without braving further perils; but here ends the tale of their adventure among the Amazons, as my father told it me.

Yet one thing, the which he learned not until long after, I have nigh forgotten to tell of, though to my mind it is the strangest of all. The Amazons pursued after Heracles and Telamon not only to recover the sacred girdle, but to avenge, as they thought, the murder of Hippolyta, whom they had found lying dead, with a dagger through her heart. *That* was the proof of her having been robbed which the wild Queen told Heracles she would give her people; and so she saved her honour; as for her life, it seems she recked little of that, after she knew she must let him go, and see his face no more.

None listened more attentively to this recital than Achilles. "By Zeus who is Lord of Dodona," he exclaimed when Ajax had made an end, "I marvel

that Heracles found it in his heart to leave this Amazon Queen, for he could not but see what manner of spirit she was of. Such a woman was fit mate for a hero, and worthy to be the mother of his children."

"Heracles," said old Nestor, gravely, "had already taken the wife his parents chose for him, as it becomes a duteous son to do."

"Why, how now, Achilles," said Odysseus jestingly, "do you recant already that opinion of women, and of those who suffer defeat from them, which I am told you lately uttered with some harshness? We shall hear next that you have captured and married some fair Amazon, in hopes she may prove a second Hippolyta; for, unlike Heracles, the son of Peleus is *not* bound to a wife of his father's choosing."

There was little love lost between Achilles and Odysseus at any time, so opposite were their natures; and at these words, in which he spied a taunt unmarked by the rest, Achilles flushed from brow to throat with anger, and laid hand on his sword-hilt. But King Agamemnon rising at the same instant and drawing Odysseus aside as for some private conference, he seemed to recollect himself on a sudden, and check the wrathful answer that rose to his lips. The assembly now broke up, and all the host, except the sentinels at their posts, were soon wrapped in welcome slumber.

Next morning at daybreak, King Agamemnon called his council together to debate how best they might repair the failure of yesterday's assault; and when this was determined, they marched on the city in the same order as before. And as before, the

Trojans came out and gave them battle, and the Amazons made onslaught—falling this time upon the right wing of the Greeks, where fought the Myrmidons. But this time the women-warriors were surprised in their turn. For Achilles had divided his forces, and with the one half he himself remained in the rear of the host until the battle joined. And no sooner had the Amazons swooped on the Greek right, than the rattle of chariot wheels sounded behind them; the terrible war-cry of Achilles rang like a trumpet in their ears; and they found themselves ringed about by a wall of levelled lances. From that arena of death there was no escape; but flight was not in their thoughts; savagely as the wolf they fought at bay—until that happened which gave both Greeks and Amazons pause awhile.

Achilles had leaped from his chariot and forced his way through the thick of the fight to Penthesilea, whose broad, glittering girdle proclaimed her the Amazon Queen. "Yield, warrior maid," he cried, seizing her bridle-rein, "yield yourself prisoner to Achilles." For all reply, Penthesilea leaned from her horse and dealt him with her battle-axe a blow on the helm that would have cleft it in twain, had it not been of heavenly metal. And with that, the two began a combat whereon all around paused to look, as drawn by a spell; nor was it any marvel that so strange and deadly an encounter between creatures so beautiful should hold breathless all who witnessed it, even in the heat of battle. But a marvel it was to see how the beauty of each—golden-haired youth and dark-eyed maiden—was lighted up by their passion

of rage as by clear flame. For a few moments, they seemed not unequally matched; such the dexterity of the Amazon to strike and to avoid blows, and so gallant an ally was the yellow horse she rode, who reared and struck out furiously with his hoofs. But Achilles, keeping hold on the bridle with his left hand, by sheer strength forced the steed backward on his haunches until he rolled over with his rider. Penthesilea leapt lightly to her feet, plucked a dagger from her side, and sprang right at Achilles' face, like a wounded wildcat; his great sword flashed and fell—and all was over.

When the Amazons saw their Queen was dead they threw down their weapons, and fell to wailing, beating their breasts and tearing their hair, as though lost to all sense of their own desperate plight. The Myrmidon spearmen, startled by this unexampled demeanour, hung motionless for an instant; before they could recover themselves, Achilles sent his voice thundering over the field, far-heard above the din of battle—"A truce, sons of the Greeks! A truce, men of Troy! Achilles demands parley with the foe!"

Then straightway Greeks and Trojans drew their ranks apart, and stood wondering; and into the blood-stained space between stepped Achilles, bearing Penthesilea in his arms. He had wrapped the dead maiden in his own cloak of scarlet; her wax-white face was already peaceful; her dusky hair, loosened from its coronal by her fall from horseback, streamed over his shoulder almost to the ground. And in that clarion voice that the Trojans had so often quaked

to hear, he said to them, " Warriors of Troy, let us stay the fight this day, that we may do honour to one who was the bravest of us all. Behold her here—your Amazon ally, slain by my hand. And you, King Agamemnon, wise Nestor, and all my comrades, look on her likewise ; for I say to you that of the thousand souls I have sent to the House of Hades, this maiden's only have I known for the peer of mine. Now methinks she had such a death as she herself would have desired ; and I am fain to add thereto one honour more. Therefore let either side keep truce until to-morrow's sunrise, and let friends and foes unite to give her burial with the pomp befitting a warrior and a queen."

Glad enough were the Trojans to have respite from battle, but the Greek princes murmured against Achilles, saying he was clean casting away the vantage won by his overthrow of the Wild Women. Howbeit Agamemnon, fearing another feud with him, consented to the truce. Then said Nestor, " It were not well, Achilles, that all our host should remain ; seeing they are yet inflamed with the spirit of bloodshed, and easily might some fray break out among men newly come from mutual slaughter. My counsel is, that you with your Myrmidons abide to share in the funeral rites, but let the rest of us withdraw to our camp, having sworn to keep the truce you desire." And this counsel prevailed with all.

Now as the Greeks withdrew, they saw Achilles laying the body of Penthesilea in his bright chariot, and one among them turned as he passed, and mocked the son of Peleus. This man was called Thersites—

a loud-tongued, turbulent fellow of the baser sort, a brawler and a coward, who was ever ringleader of seditions among the common soldiery. "Ho, ho!" he cried, with a ribald laugh, "see yonder valiant Achilles still fondling that dead wench! By the blessed gods, the amorous youth looks as though he had a greater mind to marry her than bury her."

Achilles heard, and in one stride he reached Thersites. "I will close that foul mouth of yours," he said; and with a buffet in the face he stretched him lifeless.

So Penthesilea was brought back to the Amazon camp in the chariot of Achilles, and the Trojans made a grave for her near the barrow of Hector. At nightfall they laid her therein—for the Amazons do not burn their dead—and all the city came out to her burying, making great lamentation. And King Priam and his sons came also, bringing gifts of honour, as did likewise Achilles; for he had sent to his tents for the chiefest jewels among his war-spoils, and he placed them in the grave with his own hands. Now Penthesilea's yellow horse stood by the while with drooped head, mourning his mistress; and when the grave was filled in, one of the Amazons raised her javelin to kill him as their custom is, but Achilles bade her forbear. Then said the Amazon, "You that have thus nobly honoured our Queen, would you have her lack her favourite steed in the Spirit Land?"

"Not without her goodwill," answered Achilles, "but if I could now ask the horse of her as a gift, what think you she would say?"

"She would bestow him on you right gladly," said the Amazon, quickly. "There is nothing Penthesilea,

nor we her people, would deny to the most generous of foes." And all the warrior-women cried, "Take the horse, great chieftain; proud are we he should be yours—proud he too will be of such a master."

But Achilles stroked the yellow steed's glossy neck, and said, "I meant not so; for not long shall I be master of any horse, no, not of Xanthus and Balius that I love so well. But let this gallant beast live, for Achilles' sake, and cherish him—as, indeed, I know you will—for the sake of Penthesilea."

"That will we," cried all the Amazons; and with that Achilles left them and went his way.

Now all that night the Amazons made moan for Penthesilea, while by Priam's command the Trojans raised a great mound over her grave; but at daybreak they mounted their horses and departed to their own country. For without a queen it is not lawful for the Amazons to fight; and when a queen dies they must meet to choose another in the great Temple of Ares that is in their land.

Then were the Trojans much dispirited, deeming that they had now lost the last of their allies; for ere this they had seen the overthrow of many helpers that came to them from afar; even from stormy Thrace and from the wide land of Lycia, whose godlike prince, Sarpedon, Patroclus slew in his latest fight. But it was decreed of Fate that yet one more helper should appear for King Priam.

For even while he stood on the high watch-tower of his palace, gazing after the departing Amazons, the King was 'ware of an armed multitude approaching from the East. As they drew nigh, the clang of

cymbals and the roll of drums smote upon his ears, and brought the Trojans thronging to the city wall. Then marked they a vast company of men on foot, armed with short bows and painted quivers; strangely bedight with head-dresses of nodding plumes and necklets of wild-beast fangs; and naked save for the leopard-skin girt about their loins. All were of huge stature, with close-curled, jet-black hair; and the colour of their bodies was the colour of gleaming bronze. In the midst, high in a glittering chariot, rode one who seemed tallest of them all, but of another race; his golden armour was of the Trojan fashion, and his countenance, though deeply embrowned, resembled not distantly that of Hector. Wondering, the Trojans beheld this chieftain halt before their gate, and heard his loud summons—"Let King Priam of Troy appear to greet a friend and kinsman."

With what speed his old limbs might, Priam hurried to the gate, attended by his sons; the stranger chief descended from his chariot to meet him, made dignified obeisance in the Oriental manner, and addressed him in these words:—

"Though my person, royal and gracious kinsman, be unknown to you, you cannot but have heard my name. In me you behold Memnon, Prince of Ethiopia. Not unmindful of the sacred tie of blood, I am come from my far home in the lands of the Sunrise to aid you in the war whereof the fame has reached even unto us who dwell at the world's end."

"Prince," said old Priam with a troubled look, "I have heard indeed of the Ethiopians, inhabitants of earth's utmost verge—but never, I think, the name

of their ruler. But I grow an old man, and sorrows have dulled my brain—it may be I forget. Bear with me, noble Memnon, and say, what kinship have you with me, the son of Laomedon?"

"Had not Laomedon another son besides," said Memnon, "who was called Tithonus? Ah, this at least I see you remember. Tell me, then, what became of Tithonus, your brother?"

"It was never known," replied Priam. "While yet a lad in his bloom he went hunting alone on Mount Ida, one summer's morn, and was never seen again of human eye. But many believed that one of the Immortals had carried him away, for he was fair to see as the young Ganymede—who was also of our blood—whom Zeus in the likeness of an eagle caught up to the heavenly palaces, to be his cupbearer."

"They believed truth, then," said Memnon, "for the rosy-fingered Dawn looked on Tithonus, and loved him for the beauty that was like unto her own in its dewy freshness; and in her pearly car she sped him to the cloud-curtained pavilions of the East. And there the enamoured goddess deigned to become a mortal's bride. Of that union a son was born—who stands before you."

Then joyfully Priam embraced him, saying, "Welcome, thrice welcome, child of my brother. Now I scan you more closely, I well perceive your likeness to the princes of our blood—ay, to my loved son Hector that is gone. But my brother—does he yet live? I fear me, no; he was my elder by many years—a babe in arms was I when he vanished from Troy."

"Tithonus lives," said Memnon, solemnly, "but—

against his will. Fain would he lay down the burden of extreme age, and it may not be; he knows that it may never, never be. For in the day of their espousals, Dawn bade him ask one boon, whatsoever he would; and in his witlessness he chose life immortal, and bethought him not to ask therewithal immortal youth. And since the goddess had power but that once to grant such a gift, neither can recall it, Tithonus must languish for ever in her roseate halls, the shrunken shadow of his former self."

Now while these thus spoke together, Achilles had gone down to the beach of the sea, to a place apart from the ships; and there he sat in the early sunlight musing many things. Then appeared to him Thetis his mother, rising out of the blue deep like a morning cloud; and she drew near and stood before her son, weeping bitterly.

"Is there fresh cause of tears, my mother," said Achilles, "or do you but come to renew sorrow with fruitless plainings?"

"Child," said Thetis, "I am come with a warning. By all my love I entreat you, go not forth to battle this day, for that will give wings to your doom."

"Ah, lady mother," answered Achilles, sighing deeply, "what avails it to tell me this? Bethink you how, when I thirsted for Hector's blood, you warned me that my death was appointed in short space after his. Little I recked of that, if only I might slay him first as he slew Patroclus, when I, woe's me, sat afar, not knowing it—not there to succour my comrade in his utmost need! And now

I have had vengeance; but will that bring me back the light of mine eyes that is hidden in the grave? Is it any profit to me to live, widowed of my heart's friend? Nay, but welcome shall be the hour of my death, whensoever Zeus wills it to betide. But I marvel, goddess, wherefore you should seek to avert the thing that you know ordained. Long since you revealed to me that if I went to Troy, nevermore must I see home again."

"Alas," said Thetis, "and against all my pleadings you set your face as a flint, both then and in the day Patroclus fell. But hear me yet this once again, child of my tears! Though Zeus himself cannot avert the early doom that you chose for love of glory, my prayers have won him to delay it, if you will but heed what now I bid you. O, harden not your heart—be not so pitiless to the mother that bore you as to hasten the day of her anguish."

Then Achilles tenderly embraced his mother and said to her, "Weep not, Lady of the Waves, but tell me, from whom does peril threaten me in the fight to-day?"

"From Memnon, Prince of the Ethiopians," replied Thetis, "who is even now come with a great host to the defence of Troy, being near of kin to Priam by his father. He, too, is the son of a goddess—of her that brings light to mortals, sacred Dawn. Now it is ordained that Memnon shall fall in battle this very day; of this Dawn had knowledge; and though she might not save him, she sought and obtained of Zeus that her eyes should never behold among the living the slayer of her child. Therefore, bitter fear

is mine lest Memnon fall by your spear invincible ; and so you likewise perish, or ever Dawn's pure eyelids open on the world again."

Then said Achilles : " Would with all my heart that I may look no more upon her holy light ; no better is it to me than darkness, for since Patroclus died I am like to one whose sight is lost. But this will I do, mother, for your sake, if it yield you any comfort ; needs must I bear the brunt of fight with the chiefs my comrades, but I will post my Myrmidons far from the ranks of the Ethiopians, and avoid encounter with their prince to the utmost of my power. I will not cope with him, I promise you, unless the chances of the mellay force me thereto. And that is much for your son to promise ; for, like the eagle of the rock, he flies ever at the lordliest quarry he can spy."

Thetis answered never a word, but drew her son to her bosom, weeping silently. And while she clasped him in her snow-white arms, bedewing his mailed breast with tears, a peal of thunder rolled through the clear heaven. Thetis looked upward and said, " Chide not, O Thunderer, for I strive no more against thy decree." With that, she pressed one kiss on the brow of Achilles, and glided from him like a ghost, and plunged beneath the waves.

The passing of Achilles

Now had the sun appeared in his strength above the peak of Ida, and the crystal hollow of heaven was filled with his sacred beams, even as a cup overflows with wine at the banquet. And straightway Zeus called fierce Discord before his throne, and sent her flying down to the ships of the Greeks that she might

put lust of battle into their hearts. Thither came the baneful goddess in likeness of a vulture, and perched on the black ship of Odysseus where it lay midmost of the line, and flapped her broad wings, yelling as vultures yell over the bodies of the slain. Then forthwith every man of the host grew athirst for the fray, even such as were most weary of continual fight and yearned most to be gone from Troy. So clamour of shouting arose in all the camp, and mighty din of warriors arming and chariots harnessed in haste; little need had the chiefs that day to stir up their vassals to the work of war, for one and all were zealous of themselves.

Forth they went, all the host of them, soon as the battalions were marshalled, eager as wolves that follow the trail of a stricken deer; and while they fared over the plain, a little cloud drifted over them in the blue, and dissolved in a shower of rain-drops clammy with gore. Thus did Zeus give sign how the blood of captains and of kings should be poured out that day like water; but the portent stayed not the Greeks in their fiery course, for Discord urged them on with invisible lash.

Now midway of the plain the Trojans met them, having descried their coming from afar; and a gallant sight it was to see the two armies draw together in order of battle. With the warriors of Troy came a remnant of their allies, Lycians and Mysians; and a mixed company of aliens, men outlawed and cityless, rovers on the earth, that fought for hire. And in the post of honour, on the right, were seen the dark ranks of the Ethiopians, led by Memnon in his resplendent chariot of four white steeds. As a flock of

cranes, scared aloft from their marshy feeding-ground, rend the air with harshest cries, so cried and clamoured together the mixed armament of Troy in many an outlandish tongue. But the Greeks came on in silence, like well-schooled soldiers, hearkening mutely for the voice of their commanders and scorning to spend their breath in boastful outcry.

Now the men of Diomed, and Odysseus, and Ajax, were marshalled on the left fronting the Ethiopians; Agamemnon himself commanded the midmost battalion, having with him Menelaus, and Nestor with his sons, and many a chief of renown besides; these had the sons and kinsmen of Priam over against them, with the men of Troy and the mercenaries. And Achilles, with the Myrmidons, held his wonted post on the right, and faced the Lycian and Mysian allies. But when King Agamemnon beheld the Ethiopians he hastened to him along the lines and said. "See you, Achilles, the new foes that are mustered yonder, how many they are and stalwart, and grim of aspect; and their leader is even like unto a god? Would that the grave had gaped for me in mine own land ere I led a host against this city, for Zeus will never make an end of succouring it with warriors of every race under heaven. But come now, son of Peleus, set your array over against these barbarians, for none but you, methinks, can avail to withstand them."

But sternly answered Achilles: "What words are these you have let fall, King of Argos? Now might the soul of Hector laugh and be glad, to hear that mighty Agamemnon is afeared of half-naked blackamoors. What, must I shift my array to cope with such as these? Not so; here will I bide, unless, forsooth,

they make head against our comrades. As for their prince, soon enough will Diomed or stout Ajax lower his proud crest and strip him of all that golden gear."

So spake he, mindful of his promise to Thetis, yet with no feigned scorn; for he well believed that the heavy-armed Greeks could overmatch the fiercest barbarians at any odds.

And now both hosts were set in array, and signal given for battle; and shoulder to shoulder charged the front ranks of either, and clashed together with thunder of shield on shield. And behind the press of the bronze-shielded footmen the chieftains drove to and fro, each cheering on his vassals and watching well his time to leap from his chariot and break a way through the lines. But long while stood that living wall unbroken; for even as two lordly stags battle for the mastery, locking their antlers together and thrusting with all their weight, and neither can stir the other a foot; even so foeman thrust shield against foeman along the serried lines, nor could gain an inch of ground.

At last Prince Memnon, devising subtlety, made the foremost of his dusky legions wheel as for flight; and the Greeks shouted and rushed after, and cut down many, until they turned again to wage desperate combat. Thus the columns of Ajax and Diomed were sundered from the rest—as for Odysseus, he restrained what men he could, scenting a snare—and meantime Memnon with the flower of his host charged down on the flank of Agamemnon's battalion. And the press of men-at-arms was scattered by the shock of his onset, and now they fought dispersedly, man to

man, with the fury of wolves. But on rushed Memnon through the mellay, encompassed with a pillar of dust sent up by the whirling wheels ; in sight like the bright, baleful star that rises in harvest time, when it glitters athwart the storm-cloud ; and ever he looked about him to spy a chieftain worthy his encounter.

Then marked he noble Nestor driving his burnished car, and he cast at him with his javelin. Nestor it missed, but struck the trace-horse of his car full on the crest, piercing bone and brain ; and the steed fell dead, dragging his two yoke-fellows to their knees. Nimbly the old man leapt down to cut the trace and right the struggling pair—for charioteer he had none, since by reason of age he wielded weapons no more, but took the field only to strengthen the hands of others with skilful leadership. Now in a trice he got the horses to their feet, but as he did so he saw gigantic Memnon close upon him, brandishing his great curved scimitar. Then the old man's heart failed him for fear ; he shrank back, and cried in a loud voice of anguish, " Help, my sons ! Hither and help me, or I perish ! "

Antilochus, his youngest, heard the cry, and came speeding like the wind ; in the nick of time he sprang from his chariot and threw himself in front of Nestor. " Mount and flee, my father," he said, " while I hold the foe in play " ; and so saying, he hurled his spear at Memnon with a good aim and true. But deftly Memnon swerved aside, and the spear flew over his left shoulder and buried its point in the ground. Loud laughed the haughty prince in triumph, and rushed upon Antilochus, whirling aloft his scimitar with both

hands, and smote him where neck and shoulder join or ever he could ward off the blow. As a sapling oak falls in its summer glory beneath the woodman's axe, and its green crown lies wilting on the mountain-side, so fell young Antilochus, so his comely head lay low in the bloody dust. His father saw it, looking backward as he fled; then groaned he in agony of soul, and urged his horses on, seeking some helper. But Memnon exulted aloud, and set his foot on the dead man's breast, and stripped him of corselet and helm.

Now Achilles was making havoc of the Lycians; and as he ranged hither and thither afoot, dealing death, he lifted up his eyes and saw Nestor coming in wild career, like one distraught. And Nestor cried to him, saying, "Help me now, son of Peleus, for sore is my need. Antilochus is fallen, woe the day—fallen in his prime to save this grey, withered head—and the slayer even now despoils his corse. O, mount and ride with me, if ever you held him dear, to rescue his body and avenge him."

Then Achilles beat his bosom and leapt up beside Nestor in the chariot, and said, "Who has done this deed, old man? Not long shall he boast of it, be he who he may."

"It was the prince of the dark-skinned folk," answered Nestor, turning his steeds; "he came against me, huge and terrible as a Titan, and was at point to slay me. Then cried I to my sons, and Antilochus came speeding amain—would to Zeus he had heard me not, but I had perished in his stead."

With that he gave rein to the coursers and they flew

like the wind to the place where Antilochus lay; and there stood the Prince of Ethiopia bestriding the corse, and the goodly arms were at his feet. To him spoke Achilles: "You of all men else have I avoided, Son of the Morning; but now needs must you pay me the price of his blood who lies there. To your chariot then and let us fight; for not gold of Ethiopia shall you pay, but life for life. And know that your adversary is Achilles, son of silver-footed immortal Thetis."

"Vaunt not yourself of that, renowned Achilles," answered Memnon, scornfully, "seeing I avow myself of higher lineage by far. For *my* mother is the celestial Dawn, worshipped of all; *yours*, but one of the fifty daughters of a Sea-god. And think not to daunt me, like a child, with words, but spare your threats until we see whether it is not rather the Greeks who shall pay a heavy price this day, when they sue to ransom the bodies and armour of this youth—and of Achilles." So saying, he mounted his chariot, and both heroes addressed themselves to combat.

In that fateful hour, the heights round about Troy plain were thronged with unseen presences; for the gods were come down out of heaven to watch the fortune of battle, both those that were helpers to the Greeks and those that befriended the Trojans. But Zeus sat apart on topmost Ida, tabernacled in cloud, and held in his hand the golden balance wherein he weighs the issues of fight. And now he thundered from the mountain-top, doing honour to those twain in their glorious encounter.

Now Memnon was first to throw his flashing spear; mightily he threw, aiming full at Achilles' right breast;

nor missed, but the spear-point rebounded from the corselet divine Hephaestus wrought, as though the trenchant iron were a child's dart of reed.

Then Achilles poised and flung the spear that none but he could wield; the huge ashen shaft whereof Chiron the Centaur cut on Mount Pelion, and gave the spear to youthful Peleus for a guest-gift, and Peleus in old age gave it to his son. And as it flew from Achilles' hand, the deathful point made lightnings in the blaze of noon, and it clove the air with the sound of a rushing wind. Then did Memnon avoid swift doom by a hand's-breadth; for he started aside, leaning far out from the chariot; and the spear pierced but the rim of his shield, that else had crashed through the centre and found his heart; nevertheless, the force of that blow hurled him headlong to earth. Loud clanged his glittering panoply as he fell, and his white steeds reared and snorted in terror, and fled over the plain, for all their charioteer could do. Achilles leapt from Nestor's car and made at him with drawn sword; but Memnon sprang up, and wrenched the spear from his shield, and flew upon Achilles, scimitar in hand. As when two lions, hunger-mad, fight on the hill over the bleeding carcase of a deer that the one has slain, so fought those two beside dead Antilochus; and the company of the Immortals watched them with their shining eyes.

But now Zeus put the fates of both into his golden scales; and the scale of Memnon sank low, heavy with doom. In that instant, the great brand of Achilles beat down Memnon's guard; in the next, it plunged deep through breastplate and through breast,

and like a thunder-smitten tower he reeled and crashed to earth. And Achilles stood looking on him as he lay, clutching the dust, and said, "Not again, O Prince, will you vaunt your goddess mother as excelling Thetis of the waves, nor fondly deem that Greeks shall sue to Ethiopians for ransom of their dead. Truly, small profit have the Trojans of all the helpers that arise for them from the ends of the earth; but least of you, bright Child of Dawn. For like her sparkling dews have you passed from their ken, ere yet the sun rides at his highest."

And answer made great Memnon, gasping out his soul, "Rejoice not over me, my conqueror, for ere yon sun go down you shall be even as I. Behold, this comfort some god makes known to me at the last." And with that word his spirit fled.

Then answered Achilles: "Go forth on the dark road I too must tread ere nightfall. Yea, well I know how soon I am to follow; so much the rather will I bestir myself to send yet other souls before me down to the House of Hades." So saying, he rushed into the thickest of the fight.

But Nestor caught sight of Odysseus nigh at hand, giving chase to a foeman, and called to him for aid; and with his help the old man laid Antilochus in the chariot, together with his armour. Then they turned to strip the body of Memnon of his golden harness—but lo, it was vanished clean away, and where it had lain was nought but a pool of blood. For Dawn suffered not her child to lie weltering on the battle-plain, a prey to the spoilers and after that to dogs and birds; like to a wreath of morning mist she came

stealing over the field, and lightly, as a goddess can, she bore him aloft, unseen of human eyes. Far from dolorous Troy she sped him, to where, in a vale of Phrygia, silver poplars wave beside an eddying river; there she made his sepulchre, and there it is unto this day. And yearly, on the day he died, a flock of birds visit the tomb that are called Memnon's birds, like crested larks; they clear away the fallen twigs and leaves with their bills, and, having dipped their wings in the river water, they scatter it in showers on the grassy mound. So, at least, the folk of Phrygia tell, and they say these birds are the spirits of the Ethiopians who fell at Troy.

Now when Nestor saw that the body of Memnon was gone, he said to Odysseus, "Of a surety, this is the work of some god; nor marvel I that there should be such care in heaven for that fallen prince, seeing he avowed himself the son of ever-sacred Dawn."

"Ay, he was goddess-born, like Achilles that slew him," answered Odysseus, "and little such birth availed him, or will avail, I fear me, the son of Thetis. For not Zeus himself might save his son, Lycian Sarpedon, from the doom that comes to every churl. But here is no time for speech—I must away. See, the tide of fight has rolled Troy-wards; safely now may you return alone to the camp with your piteous freight."

So old Nestor departed from the field, mourning as he went; and Odysseus hied him back to the work of war.

By this, as he said, the tide of battle was turned; for the Trojans were fleeing before Achilles. As when

a roaring lion flies upon a herd at graze, and the kine scatter before him over the pasture, lowing in their terror—now on one, now on another he springs, greedy to slay ; so Achilles bounded after the Trojans, crying his dread war-cry ; so leapt on man after man as they fled, shrieking, this way and that. And after him streamed a mingled mass of pursuers and pursued ; and now might the watchers on Troy wall behold close at hand the dismal rout and slaughter of their host. Nor durst they open the gates to give them refuge, lest the Greeks should enter on their heels ; so hot was the pursuit.

But the Immortals that favoured Troy, even Phoebus Apollo and Artemis, and fair Leto their mother, and Ares, and golden Aphrodite—these drew nigh the city, grieved at heart ; and thus spoke warrior Ares to Apollo : " What though Father Zeus forbade us any more to do battle for Troy, shall we endure to behold murderous Achilles storm the wall, exceeding his destiny ? Nay, let us arise against him, thou and I, and turn him back ; not against us two, I ween, shall he stand long, for all his mad pride."

But Phoebus Apollo answered, " Not so, my brother, lest valiant Athena be stirred up to take his part, whom thou hast known ere now for thy better in fight. Let him be awhile, for Zeus hath granted him his fill of glory this day, to the going down of the sun. But in the hour when he thinks full surely to storm yonder wall, beyond his destiny, then will I so deal with him as shall well content thee."

So Ares refrained himself from fight, and with Apollo and the goddesses he took stand on the tomb

of a Trojan king of old—a high-built barrow overlooking all the plain. But thence he sent forth his mighty voice, as it were the roar of flame through a forest, calling on the Trojans to turn and play the man, for not that day should their city fall; and therewith he breathed into them valour and strength. So all day long the battle raged beneath Troy wall. And ever the spear of Achilles was lifted up to slay; and wheresoever he passed through the mellay, there might you see the dead lie thick about his track as ranks of bearded wheat in the path of the storm.

But when the day was far spent, Achilles took breath awhile and looked seaward, and beheld the tranquil deep and measureless vault of air aflame with the pomp of sunset. Wistfully he gazed, as one that looks his last on the dear fields of home, and with a bursting sigh he said, "Farewell, thou glorious Sun, hail and farewell! No more shall these eyes be gladdened with thy beams, thrice-holy god, but languish in darkness for ever. Ah, happier is a peasant's thrall that sees thy blessed light, than a king that holds sceptred sway among the dead. But till that light fail me, let me be up and doing; who knows but I may win the crown of all our toils in this last hour?" He then darted to the foot of Troy wall, shouting his dread war-cry, and the Myrmidons gathered after him as he ran. And where a buttress of rough masonry stood out from the rampart, he flung down his spear, and climbed by the stonework of the corner, lightly as ever man clomb a stair. And the men upon the wall were astonished at the shout of Achilles in their ears, and the flashing of his sunlit helm as he mounted

aloft, insomuch that they fled from his coming as from the face of a god. Nor other than a god he seemed to the wondering hosts below, when his form appeared on the battlements, towering up resplendent against the glowing sky. Then, indeed, both Greeks and Trojans deemed the end was come, and the cry of thousands went up in diverse tones of triumph and anguish—"Behold, some god hath stormed the wall! Great Troy is fallen, is fallen at last!" And next there burst exulting shouts from all the Greeks—"Achilles! It is Achilles yonder! See, the bold Myrmidons essay to follow him!—On friends, make up to the assault—the glorious son of Peleus beckons us on!"

But meanwhile Phoebus Apollo unslung from his shoulder the bow that is his joy, and drew an arrow from his shining quiver, and glided like a sunbeam to where, on the outskirts of the fight, Paris leaned against the stem of an oak, bemused with despair. The god came before him in his own shape and said, "What ails Paris, best archer of the Trojans, to stand idle here when he might win deathless renown? Look where Achilles, high upon the wall, tears down the cornice with the god-given strength of his hands, breaking way for the Greeks—up, now, shoot at that goodly mark, and be ever famed as the deliverer of Troy."

"Ah, glorious Apollo," answered Paris, "do you appear to me only to mock those you have forsaken? For well I know the son of Thetis can nowhere be wounded but in the left heel—and what mortal can hit *that* mark at the distance of yonder wall? Were not you hard of heart beyond all gods, your own shafts,

Archer divine, would have slain ere now the scourge of your chosen people."

"Be it unto you according to that word," said Apollo, frowning. "I spoke to prove you, and had you not doubted, your arrow should have flown true as my own. But now shall Achilles verily fall by my shaft, and you lose half the glory of the deed. Take this my bow and lay this arrow to the string—and beware how you disobey me twice."

Sternly spoke the Archer god, and Paris obeyed him trembling. Then Apollo laid his hands on the hands of Paris, from behind, and caused him to draw the bowstring with strength not his own, bending the bow into an arc, and let fly the gleaming arrow. Singing it flew, and therewithal the great bow twanged loud and sweet as the chime of harpstrings. And swifter than eye could follow that shaft found its mark; for Paris saw only that Achilles rose suddenly to his full height, threw up his arms, and fell, like a falling star, headlong from the battlement. In the same instant the sun's broad disk sank below the waves and the glory faded from earth and sky.

Then from all the Greek hosts rose a cry of horror —for all were gathered at the wall's foot while Achilles laboured above, some striving to clamber up, others piling together the huge stones he cast down, to mount thereby; nor heeded they any longer the Trojans, who meanwhile had sped through the city gate to make their last stand within. And these, hearing that cry, flocked to the wall, and looked down on the white, upturned face of Achilles, who lay dead in the midst of his weeping Myrmidons. Unwounded he

seemed, and lay like one asleep ; for they had pillowed his head on his shield and straightened the wan limbs ; but whoso looked narrowly might spy a tiny graze, no deeper than a pin-prick, on his left heel. For even so slight are the wounds dealt by the arrows of Apollo, that slay with a touch. Neither can any man find them when their work is done, but they return viewless into the hand of the god.

Now who would not think that the men of Troy would have been filled beyond measure with rejoicing and exultation, to see the terror of all their race stretched lifeless before their eyes ? Yet it was not so ; no sound of laughter, no voice of triumph or thanksgiving was heard among them ; but silently, with awestruck faces, they watched from the wall, while the Myrmidons lifted Achilles and laid him in his chariot, that his trusty charioteer, Automedon, had brought nigh. And then came old Priam upon the wall with the elders of the city ; and Helen followed them, and Cassandra, and Andromache with Hector's babe in her arms : all these gazed mutely on Achilles dead, as though that sight was strange to them beyond the happenings of a dream. But the Greeks wept aloud, all the host of them, and the sons of Atreus the loudest ; and like a moaning tide their battalions closed around the chariot and drew away across the plain, through the fast-falling twilight. Meantime, Paris stood yet beneath the oak, doubting whether he had but wounded Achilles, or slain him outright ; for even as the arrow flew, Apollo snatched the bow from him and was gone. But by the lamentations of the Greeks as they came on, he perceived that

Achilles was already dead, and he hid behind the oak to watch their passing, glorying in his heart. Then saw he in their midst the immortal horses, Xanthus and Balius, that Zeus bestowed on King Peleus long of yore, stepping slowly with down-drooped heads, as well knowing what burden they bore along; none drove them, but the spangled reins were tied to the chariot-rails and the charioteer followed on foot, lamenting. And over the car were spread cloaks of scarlet and purple, shrouding that which lay within; so Paris alone of the Trojans did not look upon his handiwork; none the less, he rejoiced over it, laughing to himself, and said, "Ah, Hector, my brother, how often would you chide my slackness in fight, how often cast scorn on me for that I had skill of no manlier weapon than the bow! Yet now I, the bowman, the faint-heart among Priam's valiant sons, have lightly vanquished the vanquisher of my brethren. Saviour of Troy am I, for never can the Greeks prevail against it without Achilles." Thus he boasted to himself, while the host passed by his hiding-place; then sped back to the city to tell what he had done.

But not even deliverance from their most dreaded foe could assuage the grief of Priam and his people for the huge havoc he had made of both Trojans and allies on his last field of fight. So through the brief hours of the summer night, city and camp rang alike with noise of mourning; and the Greeks beside their watchfires might see the redder glare of burning pyres under Troy walls, and hear afar the shrill cry of women and the wild keening of the Ethiopians. And ever and again fainter sounds were borne to them, blent with the

murmurs of the sea—the voices of Thetis and her sisters making piteous moan far below in their coral caves.

Now ere break of day King Agamemnon and the chiefs of the host were met together to take order for the funerals of the slain, among whom were not only Achilles and the son of Nestor, but vassals and henchmen some two score in number. And thus it seemed best to them : to burn on one common pyre the bodies of the men-at-arms, and lay their ashes in one grave hard by the camp, where already there were many such ; but to raise for Achilles a pyre some way off, on a promontory of the shore, and there build his tomb, that it might be singled out from the rest to all time coming. But to Antilochus they appointed this signal honour, that his body should be burned on the pyre of Achilles ; yet so far apart that their ashes should not mingle ; for at the burying of Patroclus, Achilles took an oath of all the princes that when he too was fallen they would lay his bones in the urn of his loved comrade.

And next the chieftains took thought of sacrifices and burnt-offerings, and Agamemnon declared that he himself would offer a hundred oxen at the pyre, being his king's tithe of the herds Achilles and his men had driven in their forays ; " Therefore reason would," said he, " that I should render such mark of honour to the son of Peleus." Then Menelaus and brave Diomed were both at point to speak, but Ajax quickly took the word and said, " Royal Agamemnon and comrades all, if you will hear the rede of a plain, blunt soldier, this it is—we shall best honour Achilles by avenging him. Let us first finish the work he had so nearly achieved

when death stayed his hand; then will be time enough to mourn him, then may we offer him gifts meeter for his warrior soul—the spoils of burning Troy and the blood not of oxen but of his enemies. So, methinks, he would bid us do, who was the flower of us all."

Odysseus shook his head at this, and the sons of Atreus interchanged doubtful glances; but Diomed cried, "Well spoken, Ajax! Why should we waste one hour over funeral pomps while that wall stands yet whole that Achilles died to breach for us? Now by Athena, our Lady of Succour, I swear I will but tarry till his ashes are laid in earth, and then to Troy with my men—yea, though we should go alone!"

Then the more part of the chieftains declared themselves of one mind with Ajax and Diomed; and Agamemnon, fearing dissension, gave his voice likewise on their side. So word was sent throughout the host that all save the Myrmidons and the men of Nestor should fall to the work of giving fire and sepulture to their dead comrades in arms, under command of Menelaus and Odysseus. But Automedon and the henchmen of Achilles were bidden to bring their dead lord in his chariot to the place of burning; and forth they went, the chariot of Nestor following, wherein the old man stood beside the corse of his son. And after these came Agamemnon with the rest of the princes, and the Myrmidons, and Nestor's vassals, folk of sandy Pylos; and last a long troop of slaves, bringing wood and all things needful for the funeral rites. Thus came they to the place that was chosen, a low, solitary headland carpeted with turf and the

Such was the dirge the violet crowned Muses sang over the son of Thetis

sweet wild thyme; there was the pyre raised with speed of many hands, and the two heroes were laid thereon, each apart, with great store of unguents and spices.

Soon as the pyre was kindled, vassals and slaves were sent to trench a grave on the point of the headland and throw up soil for the mound. But the chieftains abode by the pyre, silent and heavy-hearted, watching the upcurling smoke and the flames that shone palely in the glow of sunrise. Then, athwart the smoke-wreaths, they beheld nine radiant forms, as of flower-crowned maidens, hovering in air, from whose lips broke all at once a song not earthly. For now it was like the warbling of nightingales; now like the plaintive flute that shepherds hear far off on moonlit wolds, and know Pan is abroad; now, like a symphony of all sad and lovely sounds that are. Words mingled with that melody, but their sense baffled the ear like whispers in a dream; only, they seemed to tell how all things sweet and fair fleet away in little space, yet are not wholly taken from us, for their beauty is made one with the manifold beauty of Earth. Such was the dirge the violet-crowned Muses sang over the son of Thetis.

And Thetis heard them; for when they ceased, the Greek princes started as at the breaking of a spell, and were 'ware of her standing close at hand in tears, and the gentle company of her sisters weeping around her. Then said she to the Immortal Nine: "Ah, honey-voiced daughters of Zeus, another song was that you sang me on woody Pelion in the day of my espousals, when all the gods were gathered to the

marriage feast and bright Apollo led your choir, harping on his harp of gold. Nought boded he, the heavenly Seer—nor you, that know what is, and was, and is to come—of the bitter lot I must endure, mated to a mortal. Of the son I should bear, you sang in that bridal song, and how he should be of all men fairest and most glorious ; but not how his mother —ah, me—must see him perish in his flower. And now I hear once more your divine voices, hymning not Love but Death—and the child of your promise lies there ! "

" List yet again, Sea-King's daughter," answered one of the Muses, " for still our song shall be of Love—Love that in this place and hour is become Death's vanquisher."

And again they sang together ; but now the mortal listeners heard no words, only such thrilling notes of purest joyance as the lark pours from heaven's gate. And as the lark soars and sings until he and his carol are lost in the upper blue, so hovered upward the chanting Nine, and passed in melody out of sight. But with a glad cry Thetis darted forward and leaped upon the pyre, that blazed up as she did so in one clear sheet of flame ; and through that fierce, white radiance the astonied Greeks might plainly see her clasping in her arms the unscathed form of her son.

Then said the goddess in a voice of joy : " O friends and comrades of Achilles, hear what high Zeus hath granted to his mother's prayers, revealing it by the mouth of the Nine—even that his spirit should not dwell prisoner in the drear House of Hades, nor his body be consumed of ravening fire, but that I myself should waft him to a lone isle far away, where he

shall abide in great peace for ever. And you, dear sisters mine, hasten after me, that you may share my bliss in seeing life return to these fair limbs; but first unyoke Xanthus and Balius yonder, and lead them with you to their lord's new home. But with you, princes of the Greeks, I leave the glorious arms that Hephaestus forged for my son at my entreaty, commanding you to bestow them as a meed of valour on the warrior whom you account next in prowess to Achilles—for peer he hath left none. And know, that you are fated not to enter Troy except the wearer of Achilles' arms shall lead the way."

When Thetis had thus spoken, dense clouds of smoke suddenly rose from the pyre, rolling seaward; therein she floated away with Achilles in her arms, and the Greeks saw them no more. Gone also were the lovely troop of the sea-maidens, and gone Xanthus and Balius from their car; but far out on the deep the Greeks beheld the fluttering of green, translucent robes, and the tossing crests of those immortal horses as lightly they skimmed along the waves.

Then seemed it best to the chieftains to lay the ashes of Patroclus in the grave prepared for Achilles, and rear a far-seen mound thereon, that so at least the twain might have one memorial, though they were not fated to rest together in death. So they buried there the golden urn, brought from the tomb by the camp wherein Achilles laid it to await the hour when it should receive his ashes also; and still it lies deep under the high, grassy barrow that is a mark for mariners on that wide-watered, solitary shore.

After that they quenched the pyre with wine, and gathered the bones of gallant Antilochus in a fair silver urn, which Nestor carried to his chariot; for, he said, "My son shall not lie here, but in the sepulchre of his fathers in Pylos, if the gods spare me to come home alive. Graciously may they hear my prayer to sleep beside him there at last!"

Then Agamemnon and all the chieftains returned again to their camp, pondering deeply the things they had seen and heard.

Of the contest for the arms of Achilles

EAGER though Diomed was to renew the assault that day, it was plain to him and to all that award must first be made of the arms of Achilles ; since the wearer of those arms, Thetis had said, was destined to be foremost in storming the city.

So, after breaking their fast, the council of chiefs

met in their place of assembly—a level patch of sand enclosed by a circle of rough-hewn stone seats—and silence being proclaimed by the heralds, Agamemnon rose up and thus addressed them :

" Princes, my comrades, you have heard one and all the command of immortal Thetis that we should make choice of the best warrior amongst us to receive the wondrous arms forged for Achilles by the lame smith-god. Now, therefore, let each of you give his voice for whom he will, without fear or favour. But for my own part, I desire to waive whatever claim I may possess to this meed of valour, because of the high office I hold among you. For it sorts not with the dignity of a general-in-chief to enter such a contest ; wherein, if another is preferred before him, his authority is lessened in all eyes, but if he is victor, envious tongues declare his rank, not his merit, hath prevailed. Neither will I give my suffrage until the rest have spoken, lest I should seem to bias your free choice."

Then out spoke impetuous Diomed : " Right royal Agamemnon, it can matter little who speaks first, who last, in such a case ; for all here will own that Ajax, son of Telamon, is by far the best warrior we have seen, next to peerless Achilles. Who but he is ever foremost in attack and last in retreat ? Who else took up great Hector's challenge to single combat, ay, and held his own ?—who else stood lion-like at bay over slain Patroclus and rescued the corse from overwhelming odds ? And when Hector stormed our camp, while Achilles still kept aloof, nursing his bitter wrath—when all seemed lost, I say, who but Ajax saved the ships from the Trojan fire-brands and turned the tide of fight ? But time would fail to tell all his valorous

deeds; and all here are eye-witnesses to the same. No delay, then—let us bid the son of Telamon take those glorious arms, as his by unquestioned right!"

He ceased, and applausive murmurs told that the greater part of the assembly were of one mind with him. But Odysseus rose up and said, "Generous son of Tydeus, though you forget your own daring exploits, so do not we—I least of all, who have had some slight share therein. To speak of one only—it was not Ajax, I think, who, with a single comrade, surprised the Thracians' camp by night, killed their king and twelve men besides, and drove off his famous horses? That, in my poor judgment, showed greater prowess than laying on blows in the mellay, in broad daylight and well backed by troops of friends. Therefore, chieftains, were these arms *mine* to bestow——"

"Forbear, Odysseus, I pray you," broke in Diomed; "good comrades we have ever been, but now you play no true friend's part, setting my deeds above a better man's. 'Twas kindly meant, I doubt not, but no more of it! I tell you, if the arms were yours to bestow, and you offered them to me, as I take you to mean, my father's son would think foul scorn to rob noble Ajax of his due."

"Do you tell me that?" answered Odysseus composedly; "then I will even lay before this company the claims of—*my* father's son. Give me leave, King Agamemnon and princes all, while I recall the acts of one who, though he be not the peer of stalwart Ajax in strength, yet, take him for all in all, is the better warrior—as I shall prove to you."

At this, surprise held the assembly mute; Diomed alone gave vent to an angry exclamation, and half rose;

but Agamemnon, stretching forth his sceptre to impose silence, said, "Proceed, wise son of Laertes. Good right have you to plead your claim, and when you have done so we will hear Ajax also in his own behalf, that we may well and fairly judge between you."

Now had you seen Odysseus as he stood there, awaiting leave to speak, you would have thought him some stolid peasant churl, and marvelled what he did in that assemblage of high-born heroes. For all the rest were men of great stature and lofty bearing, and each would stand forth in debate with kingly glance and gesture, waving his staff slowly and gracefully to bespeak attention; but Odysseus, though broad-shouldered and well knit, was below middle height; his presence was mean, and he stood stock-still with a clownish air, keeping his eyes fixed on the ground. Never seemed man less fitted to play the orator—until he opened his lips. But then, in deep, sonorous utterance, words flowed from him thick and fast as the snowflakes of a winter storm; and they were words of power, moulding the hearers' thoughts to what shape he would. For this was the master-stroke of his art, that he made even those he could not win upon his side think the better of Odysseus, by persuading them how exceedingly Odysseus valued their good opinion.

So now even the warmest partisans of Ajax could not but be softened towards his rival by his tone of deference to themselves, and they listened with growing goodwill to a speaker who so plainly showed his trust in their wisdom and justice.

Odysseus began by reminding them that two

things are needful in the perfect warrior—valour and prudence, for the man who fights only with his muscles can never be a match in the long run for the man who fights with his brain; the one may win a battle, but it is the other who comes off victor in a war. Hence the supreme worth of wise generalship, wherewith, to the blessing of the Greeks, the gods had so richly endowed King Agamemnon and his chief counsellor Nestor. Yet prudence is scarcely more needful to those in highest places than to those set in authority under them; who fulfil, as it were, the the duties of a pilot at a vessel's prow, looking watchfully ahead and sounding for hidden dangers, that the master mariner may know how best to steer.

From this comparison Odysseus deftly passed to the services he himself had rendered to the Greek cause from the beginning by watchfulness, shrewdness, and ready invention; but he spoke of them simply, without boastfulness or self-praise, even as though he were recounting the doings of another man.

And first he told how but for him the Greeks must have lacked their great champion, Achilles. For Thetis, foreseeing his doom at Troy, had spirited away her son to the Isle of Scyros, and presented him disguised as a maiden to the king's daughter, that he might not be found when the heralds came to the house of Peleus with the summons to war. But when none could find Achilles, Odysseus surmised that old Peleus had sent him out of danger's way to his guest-friend the King of Scyros; forthwith he went to the isle in the guise of a pedlar, and as he showed his wares to the king's daughter and her maidens his keen eye dwelt on one

taller by head and shoulders than the rest. Then on some pretext Odysseus displayed a sword of rare workmanship; enchanted with the noble weapon, the seeming maiden could not forbear handling it, and proving its temper by cleaving therewith an old helm nailed to the wall—and thus Achilles was found and known, and Odysseus easily prevailed on him to join the glorious enterprise of the Greeks.

Briefly, then, Odysseus touched on his next service—the luring of Iphigeneia to Aulis by the pretence of betrothal to Achilles. "King Agamemnon," he said, "will bear me witness that I devised the plan but for which the maiden's mother would never have suffered her to be taken from home, and our fleet could never have sailed." But he was too prudent to add in Agamemnon's presence what most of his hearers knew well—that he it was who overcame the King's resolve to spare his daughter.

Much, too, he recalled of stratagems devised against the foe in the long war; and told lastly of feats of arms that proved he could shine no less in battle than in council. And then, smiling, and looking down, he said, "Should not the best proof of a warrior's prowess be the testimony of his foes? Now, if it be your pleasure, I can call a witness to the repute I possess among the Trojans. For one of our scouts watched them last night as they burned their dead without the walls, and he can repeat to you what he overheard them say concerning me."

"Let him be summoned," said Agamemnon, and when the heralds had brought the man, he bade him declare what he had heard. And the scout said, "O

King, I was creeping through a little coppice on the plain, near one of the burning pyres, and I heard two of the Trojans that stood by talking together, and I kept still to listen. One said to the other, 'What Greek, think you, Deïphobus, will work us the most mischief now that Achilles is dead? For my part, I have most fear of Ajax, son of Telamon, and his huge strength.' But the other answered, 'You speak like a fool; Odysseus of Ithaca is more to be feared than fifty such as he. Ajax can do no more than rout us from the field, with all his thews and sinews; but Odysseus is ever hatching plots against us in that cunning brain of his, and mark my words, 'tis by his contriving Troy will fall at last, not by the wild-bull onslaughts that are all Ajax is good for.' With that, the two men moved away, and I heard no more."

Now Deïphobus was the name of one of Priam's sons, a discreet and valiant prince, next in age to Hector and best loved by him of all his brothers, who had led the Trojans since Hector's death. So the Greek chieftains thought it no small matter that he stood in such fear of Odysseus, and the scout's report did the work which Odysseus meant it should. When the man had withdrawn, he modestly yet firmly desired them to weigh well all they heard of his achievements, and assured them of his readiness to abide by their judgment; adding that if it were against him, they should not find he bore any of them a grudge or slackened in his zeal for the common cause. And thereupon he sat down in his place.

All eyes turned expectantly to Ajax, as Agamemnon called upon him to plead his claims in turn.

But Ajax remained seated, and answered, darkly scowling: "I will *not* plead, son of Atreus! Who made you lord and judge over me, your free ally, that I should stand forth at your bidding to render account of my doings—to sue and wheedle and prate like a beggar, or—an Odysseus? By the immortal gods, I marvel what stuff you are all made of to bear with him thus long! But think not Ajax will stoop to vie with him in words. No, my deeds speak loud enough for me, to all ears that are not the willing dupes of a glozing tongue!"

Passionately he spoke, glaring about him like a wounded lion, and his burly frame quivered with excess of rage.

"Curb yourself, noble Ajax," old Nestor admonished him; "unreasonable is this wrath, yea, and causeless, for what more is required of you than needs must be when any meed of valour is adjudged? Or what offence is it, that we, your peers and comrades, though well knowing your weighty claims to this glorious prize, should yet hear them from your own lips ere we award it?"

"I claim it as my due," answered Ajax sullenly, "and let that suffice. What I am, and what I have done, none here can pretend he knows not; if, knowing it, he can declare Odysseus my better, on his own head be the shame."

It was arrogantly said; and by contrast with the moderation and courtesy of the speech of Odysseus, the haughty self-confidence of Ajax doubly offended his hearers. Odysseus was quick to seize his advantage, and said, as though to himself, but loud enough

for all to hear—"I had forgotten one virtue of the perfect warrior, wherein Ajax outshines us all—*self-control.*"

"Be silent, dog," fiercely exclaimed Ajax, starting to his feet, and would have rushed upon his wily adversary had not Nestor and Diomed held him back.

"Forbear this unseemly violence, Ajax," then said Agamemnon, "and you, Odysseus, refrain from adding fuel to his wrath. Here is enough said on both sides, since Ajax in his insolence refuses to justify the claim he hath set up. Now therefore, chieftains, let us pronounce judgment between these two, each of us in turn, beginning with honoured Nestor."

"Were it not better," said Odysseus quickly, "if judgment were given by means of the voting-urn, so that none may know which chieftains pronounced for Ajax and which for me?"

"Better far," said Nestor, "for it will shut out all occasion of grudge or contention hereafter"; and the rest eagerly assenting, Agamemnon commanded the heralds to prepare for the balloting.

But at this Ajax could no longer contain himself. "What!" he thundered, rising and looking scornfully round the circle as he towered above them, "is it come to this, that the assembled princes of Greece dare not proclaim their choice by word of mouth? And why—unless they have made a choice they know unworthy? Now by Zeus above us I swear, *I* want no man's suffrage who is ashamed to give it openly. Of all that call me friend is there not one to say boldly, '*I am for Ajax*'? Not one—all silent? Diomed—do even *you* fall from me?"

"Do not think it," replied Diomed in a low voice, laying a hand on his arm, "but I yield to authority, and so must you. Be calmer, I entreat you, for your own sake; this violence harms you more than aught Odysseus can say or do. And frankly, it warrants us in desiring to vote secretly rather than risk future strife, as Nestor says."

"You are grown wondrous wise on a sudden," answered Ajax, bitterly; "for when was Diomed ever known to counsel meekness and discretion? But I see you have well learned your lesson. O, ay, *prudence* is the mark of the perfect warrior!—and so I leave you to pay homage with the rest to the illustrious pattern of that virtue."

So saying, Ajax strode out of the assembly with head erect and blazing eyes, and betook himself to his own quarters.

Diomed looked after him with a frown of perplexity. "He surely is bewitched," he said to Nestor; "what can ail him to talk so unlike himself? Proud, I have always known him, and terrible if roused to wrath—but not easily moved, and even then, never venting anger in taunts and gibes. To flout us all like this! And for what? As if, forsooth, though we admire Odysseus for wisdom, we cannot all see well enough that Ajax is far above him as a warrior."

"So you think, my son," said old Nestor, "but—a word in your ear—I would not be too sure that others see with your eyes. However, we shall soon know, for here comes Talthybius with the voting-urn."

Talthybius, the herald of Agamemnon, approached Nestor as he spoke, and setting down a tall vase of

painted clay at his feet, desired him in his master's name to preside over the voting. Meanwhile the herald of Menelaus distributed two pebbles to each of the chieftains—one white and the other red—loudly announcing that the white pebbles were to be given for Odysseus and the red for Ajax. In solemn silence every chieftain then dropped a pebble into the urn, taking care to conceal its colour; when all had thus voted, Talthybius spread a cloak upon the ground and Nestor shook out the pebbles thereon. Instantly a buzz of excited voices arose, for it was seen that of some thirty pebbles thus displayed only three were red.

Diomed stared on the cloak for a moment as if he could not believe his eyes; then said to Nestor, "The fools—the heartless fools! What has possessed them all? *Two* votes for our noblest, our bravest—besides my own! But yours was one of them, I know it, true old heart. Come, then, let us search out Ajax instantly—he must not hear this except from friends. Come, for none so well as you can break the tidings and persuade him to patience."

"I fear me he is past persuasion," began Nestor, but Diomed in his eagerness caught him by the arm and hurried him away.

. . . . . .

Morning had dawned again on the Greek camp, but still there was no sign there that the assault on the city was now to be renewed. Instead of the cheerful bustle of preparation for battle, dead silence reigned; not a chieftain was stirring abroad, and the companies of the men-at-arms sat talking with bated breath as they took their morning meal beside the

cooking-fires. The shadow of some dire event seemed brooding over all.

Presently, unnoticed by the gloomy groups around the fires, a man came swiftly into the camp from a meadow hard by, and stole along the lines of huts, keeping his head down as he went like a questing hound. Whatever trail he followed, it brought him straight to the hut of Ajax, which stood at the extreme end of the camp, a little apart from the smaller huts of his men. For when the Greeks built their encampment, Achilles and Ajax were assigned the posts of honour and of danger at the two horns of the crescent-shaped rampart.

This man was Odysseus; he halted when he came to the quarters of the men of Salamis, and looked anxiously about him; but seeing the spot apparently deserted, he went a little nearer to the closed hut of Ajax, and stood listening intently.

Not a sound came from the hut; but suddenly, close behind him, a clear and ringing voice exclaimed, "Evermore, son of Laertes, 'tis thus I find you——busied in tracking down your foes, like a keen-scented Spartan hound. And now, once more, you have run your quarry to earth."

Odysseus turned and saw great Athena standing there, leaning on her spear, and he cried, "Ah, my Lady and Queen, well I know the voice that has heartened me like a trumpet-call in many a peril! Not for the first time you deign to bless these eyes, Goddess in whom I trust! But say, have I indeed found——what I seek?" He pointed to the door of the hut and added, "Is the clue to last night's horror—*there?*"

"Odysseus," said the goddess, "though I have seen all that has passed, you shall now tell me how much is known to the Greeks, and what has brought you to this threshold. For all your mind is clouded with a doubt, and you will gain a clearness by giving it words. Speak to me, therefore, as a man speaks to his friend."

"So be it, divine Athena," anwered Odysseus. "All we know for certain is, that a fearful butchery has been done upon the sheep and cattle of the host, that were kept in a near pasture hard by the stream of Scamander; and the herdsmen who watched over them are slain also. This hideous deed was discovered by a slave, who went ere daybreak to the pasture to fetch sheep for this day's fare. He came shuddering back with the tale; and it has filled all the host with nameless terrors, for they think some malignant spirit of darkness, rather than human hands, must have wrought that wanton wickedness. Our chiefs hastened to the spot, but found no trace of the destroyer, and were utterly at a loss, insomuch as they were fain to leave *me* the task of sifting the matter. Now, I had noticed certain traces upon the meadow, and I questioned that slave more closely, who at first maintained he had seen no one; but at last he confessed, trembling, that there had passed by him the appearance of a warrior with a reeking sword—and this phantom, as he called it, was much like—*Ajax*. When I heard that I dismissed the slave, warning him to hold his peace; and I traced those blood-marks across the meadow, and saw them fainter on the sand beyond, but mingled with footprints; and the track of those footprints has led me even here. But

that Ajax did this monstrous thing passes my belief, and in good time you come, gracious Lady mine, who alone can read me this dark riddle."

"Listen then, Odysseus," said Athena; "Ajax, and none other, has done this deed, but he knew not what he did. For hatred and wounded pride so wrought upon his spirit as he brooded on his defeat, that he took his sword and stole through the camp purposing to kill you and the sons of Atreus while you slept. Yea, he was creeping over your threshold when I drew near to save you. 'This is not the place,' I whispered in his ear; 'come with me, Ajax, and I will bring you to the men you seek." With that I cast strong glamour over him, and led him to the sleeping cattle; and what he did to them he thought he did to you and the sons of Atreus and your households. Ah, had you seen him glorying in his revenge! Nay, you *shall* see him; the madness works yet in his brain, and I will call him forth."

"Do not, I beseech you, Queen," exclaimed Odysseus shrinking back.

"Fie, Odysseus!" said Athena, scornfully. "I thought you one who never feared the face of man. But be not afraid; he will not see you, for his eyes are still holden. Ho, within there! Open to me, Ajax—'tis Athena calls!"

The door of the hut swung open, and Ajax appeared on the threshold, darkly flushed, in disordered array, grasping a sword red from point to hilt with gore. Odysseus quailed before the uncanny glitter in his eyes; but they were fixed on Athena, and plainly saw nought else as he hoarsely cried, "Hail, kind goddess! All

thanks for your timely guidance! Ha, ha! Is not Ajax well avenged?"

"Excellently well," replied Athena, "if the sons of Atreus are dead."

"Dead, say you?" said Ajax, laughing wildly, "ay, dead enough; they will rob me of no more arms, unless headless men can steal."

"And Odysseus—is he also dead?" asked the goddess gravely.

"Not yet," answered he, with a savage smile, "but I have him safe within here. I am but thinking of the slowest way to kill the accursed dog. Would he had a hundred lives, that I might take them one by one!"

"Nay, now, have you not done enough?" said Athena. "I pray you, spare Odysseus for my sake."

"Ask me anything but that, divine Athena," shouted Ajax. "I cannot lose the sweetest morsel of my revenge. A-h-h-h! I will devise rare torments—I will do such things—I know not yet what they are, but I will about them now, now, now!"

"Do so," said Athena, smiling upon him, "and farewell—victorious warrior!"

She turned, still smiling that cruel smile, as Ajax rushed within, and said to Odysseus, "Behold how suddenly the mighty may be cast down, and to what depths of ruin. But yesterday, this your enemy could have challenged the world to show his equal—what think you of him now?"

"I pity him," said Odysseus in a low, troubled voice. "Though I have hated him with a great hatred, I could weep for him and myself. For I see that all men living are but walking shadows."

"Take warning, then," replied Athena, "never, like him, to provoke the high gods by overweening pride—that sin of all others least to be pardoned in creatures of a day. Remember that the all-seeing Powers ever abase the insolent in word or deed, and reward those that walk circumspectly before them, not as fools but as wise. And now withdraw yourself hence, for two friends of Ajax will be here anon, seeking the audience he denied them yester eve."

With these words the goddess vanished, and Odysseus stealthily betook himself to the sons of Atreus.

It was not long before the two friends of whom Athena spoke entered the quarters of Ajax. "I cannot tell—I like it not," Nestor was saying as they came; "wherefore should he deny us speech with him—refuse so much as to look upon us, who have ever stood highest in his regard? If, as you feared, he so misjudged us that he believed we voted for Odysseus, it would be far liker Ajax to confront us and cast the same in our teeth. And here is his door still shut, as we found it last night! Now, a plague take the officious knave, whoe'er he was, that forestalled us with the ill tidings."

"But you do not truly think," asked Diomed anxiously, "that our friend's strange mood can have aught to do with this more strange outrage? Granted he is fearfully incensed against us all, no rage would drive the man to wreak vengeance on helpless beasts."

"Unless," said Nestor solemnly, "unbridled passion brought upon him the visitation of some god. Such things have been, as I have both seen and heard talk of. But I trust we may find all is well—and yet

why this silence here? Where are Teucer and all the Salaminians?"

"Out on a foray since yester-morn," replied Diomed; "I would that Teucer had not gained his brother's leave to go, for he can do much with him in his stormiest moods. But let us try whether Ajax will open to us now."

So saying, Diomed went up to the door of the hut and knocked thereon with his staff. It was immediately opened, and a woman came out who shut it quickly and quietly behind her. She was richly dressed, young and beautiful; but her long locks hung dishevelled about her, and her face was pale and marred with weeping. "Tecmessa!" cried Diomed, "what has befallen? How is it with your lord?"

"He has come to himself," said the woman in a whisper, "but speak low—come farther away—he must not be disturbed yet awhile." She beckoned the two chiefs to a little distance; then said, with a burst of tears, "I thank the gods you are come, noble comrades of my lord. He never needed friends more!"

Now this Tecmessa, although the slave of Ajax, was of high lineage, being the daughter of a Phrygian chief whose city he had sacked; she had learned to love her captor and had borne him a son; and his friends ever treated her with all courtesy.

Nestor now took her by the hand, and spoke with fatherly kindness: "What is this I heard you say, my child, that Ajax *has come to himself?* And if it be so—if his dark fit of passion—or—or—frenzy has passed, why are you still distressed for him? Nay,

weep not thus bitterly; instruct us how to serve him, by telling us all that has befallen him in the night."

"You shall hear all I know, revered Nestor," answered Tecmessa, "but I fear me I do not know the worst. At dead of night, when the pine-brands were out in the braziers, I heard my lord moving to the doorway, and I called to him, 'Whither go you, Ajax? There is no call to arms, nothing stirs in the camp—lie down again and take your rest. But he answered with the saw men love so much, '*Silence adorns a woman best*,' and went forth. And I rekindled the brazier and sat waiting—I know not how long—until, woe's me, he rushed in again like a madman, brandishing his sword—and it was dripping with blood! Me he saw not—but made the motions of casting down some fancied burden, and trampling on it, and hacking at it with the sword, laughing hideously the while and muttering to himself of some glorious revenge on dastard foes. For hours, as it seemed, he raved thus; at last, when morning was come, he suddenly flung wide the door and spoke to some phantom of his brain, telling it he had killed the sons of Atreus and had got Odysseus a captive within, whom he meant to torture to death. And then he fell again to staring on the ground and striking it with the sword, as if he saw something there—where nothing was. But on a sudden the light of madness died out of his eyes; they fell on me, cowering in a corner, and he said in his wonted voice, "Tecmessa, what is this? What have I been doing?" I was afraid to answer, but he wrung it from me—all he had said and done in my presence. He heard me out, and sat down, cover-

ing his face with his hands; for a while he neither spoke nor stirred; then—ah, more terrible to hear than all his ravings—he burst into loud weeping, he that in sharpest suffering I have never known to shed a tear! Just ere you came, good friends, the storm that shook him passed. I left him sitting quiet as a stone. But O, what has he done?—whose blood was that on the sword? Tell me, for pity's sake—the sons of Atreus and Odysseus—has aught befallen them?"

"Nay, nay, they are alive and unharmed," gently answered Nestor; then whispered to Diomed, "You see, I guessed but too truly—and in his madness he took the cattle for his foes. And now he knows the truth! Woe the day, what can we do for him at such a pass?"

"What but in and comfort him?" answered Diomed with a groan. "But how to save him, when the Greeks learn——"

"Teucer! Where is Teucer?" rang a cry from within the hut. "Why does he tarry so long and leave me to perish alone?"

At that, Diomed bounded to the doorway and entered, and the other two followed him.

Ajax was seated on the edge of his couch helmed and in full armour, staring straight before him with lack-lustre eyes. His white, rigid countenance changed not at the sight of his friends, but in a toneless voice he said, "So I have yet two loyal comrades left. Nestor, Diomed, true hearts—*you* will not fail me at the last? Draw your swords then, and kill me."

"Ajax, my lord," shrieked Tecmessa, "what mean you? On my knees I implore, speak not such ill-omened words."

"Peace, woman, and begone!" he answered coldly. "Must I bid twice? Leave us, I say; our business is not for your eyes or ears. And you, friends, why do you not despatch?"

At a sign from Nestor, Tecmessa withdrew behind the hangings which screened the inner chamber of the hut; then said the old man: "Patience, patience, my son! To seek death as a cure for ills is but to add bane to bitterness. Rather take counsel with us, and some gentler remedy will appear."

"Ah, Nestor," answered Ajax, "do not with me as unskilled leeches do—croon spells over a festering sore that cries for prompt surgery. You see me here—a man—I may say it now without reproach—once the pride of the Greeks and terror of Troy; now tainted through and through with dishonour past cure, a shame to his friends and to his enemies a laughing-stock. Ay, would not this sight make Odysseus merry?—yet I could wish the crafty villain here to see it. By the Nether Gods, I would choke his laugh in his false throat, broken as I am! O that I had but been avenged on him before I died! And I came so near it—but Athena, who evermore defends him, beguiled me; yes, friends, she lured me from his door and beglamoured mine eyes to take the harmless beasts for the men I sought. She followed me here, too, to mock me in my frenzy, still holding up the cheat, and praying me to spare Odysseus. But when I thought her gone, her voice whispered in my ear—'*Be as thou wert wont to be; see as thou wert wont to see.*' And with that I—*remembered* the thing I had done."

"Little one, may you prove like your sire in all but fortune"

He paused, shuddering; but mastered himself, and went on in calmer tones:

"And now, whither should I turn? The gods themselves fight against me; mine own countrymen have put me to an open shame, refusing me the prize of valour; nay, from henceforth all that hear of this last infamy will shun me as one accursed. There is no rest, no shelter for Ajax more, but in the grave."

"If it be so," said Diomed with a sob, "if death is the only way, seek it not now—not thus. Fall like the mighty warrior you are, in the thick of fight; let the heart's blood of a hundred foemen cleanse every stain from your glory."

"It would not cleanse *that* stain," answered Ajax, pointing to the sword at his feet. "Therefore I will strike but one blow more with this dishonoured brand—at no Trojan breast."

He lifted the sword as he spoke, but in a flash Tecmessa had darted from her concealment and flung herself at his feet, clasping his knees.

"Have pity," she wailed, "have pity, beloved lord, on me, if on yourself you have none. Ah, you suffer—but have I not suffered more—orphaned by the spear—torn from a princely home to be the slave and chattel of a stranger? You, that in spite of all have become all to me, forsake me not now! If these poor charms were ever sweet to you, leave me not to fall into the hands of the chiefs that hate you—to hear their women say, 'Behold her that was the cherished minion of Ajax, now a servant of servants in Agamemnon's household.' And if *my* fate moves you not, O think of the child, your son! The son of

Ajax—they will make him, too, a slave when you are gone, because he was born of a bondwoman."

She ceased, overcome by tears, and Nestor said, "I would to the gods, Ajax, that this woman's words might move you as they do me."

For all reply, Ajax gently raised Tecmessa, saying, "Bring the child hither."

"He is not here," said Tecmessa, hesitatingly, "but I will fetch him, if it be your pleasure."

"Not here!" exclaimed Ajax; "since when, and wherefore, is he not here? I thought him sleeping within."

"I bade the handmaids carry him to Teucer's hut," faltered Tecmessa, "and—bar themselves in—because I feared for him when you returned—in so strange a mood."

"I understand you," replied Ajax bitterly; "you did well and wisely to remove him beyond a madman's reach. But fetch him, Tecmessa; he will run no danger now."

Tecmessa hastened forth, and until her return no word was spoken in the chamber, save that Nestor whispered to Diomed, "'Tis a good sign that he asks for the child, and the view of it will melt him yet more."

"Give him to me," said Ajax as Tecmessa re-entered carrying a lusty babe of a year old; "my son must be hardened betimes to the sight of warriors' gear."

And the babe had no fear, but kept crowing with delight as his father held him to his bronze-clad breast and, fondling him, said: "Little one, may you prove like your sire in all but fortune, so shall you not lack renown. But more than all good later

years may bring, I envy you the bliss of careless, unweeting childhood. Ah, happy, happy days while as yet you grow up like a tender plant nurtured by mild airs of spring, joying to feel yourself alive, and gladdening with innocent mirth the heart of this your mother. Now farewell, my babe; take him, Tecmessa, and fear nothing for him or for yourself when I am gone. For Teucer will guard you both as the apple of his eye until he brings you to my father's house in pleasant Salamis."

He put the child into her arms, and added, "Now, no words! Do you not know me better than to think you can change my bent? Withdraw, then, to your own chamber; I have yet to speak with my friends, and I charge you on your obedience that you disturb us not again."

Overawed by his look and tone, Tecmessa withdrew in submissive silence. Ajax looked fixedly at Nestor and Diomed in turn, and said, "I read in your faces, comrades, that you will not help me to the rest I long for. Farewell, then, for I go to seek it alone. But refuse me not at least one other service—abide here, both of you, to protect my child and his mother from the vengeance of the Greeks, until Teucer return, as he shortly will."

So saying he arose, took up his sword and made as if to go forth; but Diomed sprang before him, and planting himself in the doorway with a hand grasping either sidepost, exclaimed, "You pass not, Ajax, on such an errand, save over my body!"

Ajax turned to Nestor and calmly said, "Diomed knows too well my sword has no edge—for *him*. But

since old eyes see more clearly than young how vain a thing it is to cling to life, bid him give me way; he will reverence your grey hairs."

"Nay, son of Telamon," said the ancient, "do *you* rather reverence them; for see, I too bar your way; here stand I, as it were in your agéd father's stead, adjuring you in his name and for his sake to forego your rash purpose. Have you the heart to defy me?"

There was tense silence in the hut while one might count a score. Then Ajax spoke in a changed voice, dreamy and slow, "Defy you? I have done with defiance now. For I am schooled to see that all potencies bow to authority. Winter and Summer overstep not their measures; Darkness and Light invest this blue, ethereal frame of things in steadfast allegiance to sovran law. How much more shall not weak mortals hourly learn a doctrine of obedience—as I do, who will study henceforth to submit myself to the gods and pay acceptable homage to Agamemnon the King. But you, revered Nestor, I obey not otherwise than I would my father's self. Suffer me therefore to go forth, only for this; to wash away these stains in the sea's holy waters, that I may with pure hands offer an atoning sacrifice to the goddess I have angered—and to bury deep in earth this polluted sword. You know it well, friends; it was Hector's gift, what time we met in the duel and came off equals; and to requite his courtesy, I gave him my goodly baldric. Well saith the old saw, '*A foe's boon breeds bane*'; for I have never known one lucky day since I took that sword from Hector's hand. But now I will hide the fatal thing where none shall see it more;

wait me here the while, my friends ; and in brief space, I trust, you shall hear that out of pain I have won peace."

While Ajax spoke thus, peace seemed indeed to rest already on his wan, weary face ; even more than his words, his subdued and tranquil mien reassured both his hearers, insomuch that they permitted him to leave them without misgiving. They sat down to await his return, and silence once more reigned in the hut ; for Diomed was wrapt in thought and Nestor, wearied out with the agitations of the morning, presently fell into the light slumber of age. Thus a full hour slipped by unheeded before they were aroused by the hasty entrance of some one who called loudly for Ajax.

It was a young man, short and slender, with keen, dark eyes, accoutred as an archer.

" Teucer ! " cried Diomed, springing up, " you are welcome back indeed—sorely we have needed you ! But have you heard ?——"

" I have heard all," said Teucer quickly. " I found the chiefs in full debate as I came in—they made me listen to the charge laid against Ajax on the witness of Odysseus. *Him* I would not have credited, but Calchas was then and there inspired to confirm his saying, and to reveal—— But where is my brother? He must be told the Seer's warning on the instant."

" He is gone forth alone," said Nestor, " but fear nothing, he has come to his right mind. He left us saying he would wash off the stains of slaughter in the sea, before making his peace with Athena."

" Then he is lost ! " exclaimed Teucer, smiting his breast. " Calchas straitly charged me not to let him

stir abroad, because the heavy wrath of the goddess was upon him for this day only, and if he kept quietly in hiding until sundown he should yet escape it. My friends! let us find him and bring him back, if it be not too late! Quick, quick, we may save him yet! If he can but win through this day all will be well; the chiefs were at point to decree him death by public stoning; but when Calchas told them how he sinned through heaven-sent madness, their wrath changed to pity and awe."

"Go you with Teucer, Diomed," said Nestor; "as for me, my old limbs are too slow to be of service in the quest. Make all speed, my sons; take each of you a party of the Salaminians—for I hear them at hand—and search the shore both eastward and westward. And may the gods direct you to find and preserve him you seek!"

So Teucer took certain of his following, who were even now returned to their quarters laden with spoil of their foray, and bade others follow Diomed; and the two bands went diverse ways, scattered in twos and threes as they ranged over the knolls and hollows along the shore.

But Teucer sped westward by himself, calling his brother's name as he ran; and he had gone but a little way when he heard an answering cry from within a copse of gnarled, stunted oaks close upon the beach. Thitherward he flew, shouting in response, and the the cry answered him again; but now he knew it for a woman's, and the next instant Tecmessa came running to him from among the trees. Teucer's heart stood still at the first glimpse of her face: "I am too late?" was all he found breath to utter.

Tecmessa looked at him with tearless, despairing eyes, and pointed to the little wood. "You will find him yonder," she quietly said, "just beyond the trees —on the sand—I have covered his face with my veil."

"He is *gone*, then?" gasped Teucer, "but how—how—by what sudden end? And *you*—what do you here?"

"He has fallen on his sword," answered Tecmessa with the same strange quietude, "the sword Hector gave him; as he told us he would, only when Nestor and Diomed withstood him he feigned to resign his purpose. But he deceived not *me*; I knew he only meant to escape them and gain time to die in peace. So I stole out by the back door of the hut and followed warily, keeping out of view, resolved to turn his heart at the last moment—or die with him. But when he had passed through this wood, and I had all but overtaken him, a great awe held me back. O, Teucer, I saw him standing alone upon the open shore, and dared not approach or speak to him, so strangely it was borne in on me that he was *not* alone, that—" her voice sank to a whisper—"there were—*others* standing there—watching—waiting."

"And then?" asked Teucer, with a shudder.

"Then," she went on, "Ajax dug deep into the sand with the sword, and I thought, 'Will he but bury it, after all?'—for that was what he told Nestor he would do. But he planted it upright, hilt downwards, and stamped the sand firm about the gory blade so that it stood fast, pointing up to heaven—a grim sight. And he stepped back paces two or three, and looked at it long and hard. Then said he, 'So best

the slayer may deal his blow—the Trojan brand rooted in Trojan soil—my foeman's gift, yet now to do me the office of a friend. I am ready for thee, kindly steel; but first I will pray, as is meet. Hear me, Zeus on high, for I ask but a little thing: Send Teucer quickly hither that no hands but his may raise my corpse—no hostile eyes gloat over me lying in my blood. Naught else crave I of Powers above; but do thou, O Hermes, Shepherd of Souls, grant swift passing to my spirit; and ye, dread Virgins, fleet, all-beholding, avenging Erinnyes, I summon you from the Nether gloom to haunt the path of those that drove me to this end! And now, farewell, sweet light of day; farewell, dear distant Salamis and hearth of my home; farewell fountains and streams of Troyland that have so long refreshed me—you will see this sojourner no more. Now all is said; only the dull, cold ear of Death will hear my voice again.'

"Ah, Teucer, while my lord spoke thus I looked and listened as one spell-bound, and his every word seemed burnt into my brain; but when he ceased, terror of what I must next behold overpowered my senses, and I fell swooning to the ground. When I came to myself and mustered strength to go near—all was over with my lord; the Shepherd of Souls had been gracious to him—you can see that he passed without a struggle."

"I go to him," said Teucer, choking back a sob, "and praiséd be Zeus who likewise heard his prayer and guided me aright. But do you haste to find our men; bid them aid you to prepare all things needful and to bring them hither anon; for we will lay him

to rest in this place of his release, not yonder where he sorrowed and suffered. And see to it, Tecmessa, that all be done quietly, without word given to the rest of the camp; Ajax shall have his wish, and no unfriendly eyes witness the last rites."

Then quickly passed Teucer through the belt of trees to where the body lay on the lonely shore, covered with Tecmessa's ample, saffron-coloured veil. He raised that pall, and looked tenderly awhile on his dead brother's face ere he covered it again; then sat him down and wept. And as he wept thus he said, "O Ajax, noblest of men and dearest to me, what shall I do or whither go for refuge, bereft of you? For in this land all are mine enemies now—more hateful than the Trojans do I count the Greeks that have so basely wronged you. And if I betake me home again, how shall I face our stern old sire—with these tidings? If his heart broke not to hear them, well I know that the sight of me would be pain and grief to him ever after; for all his pride was in you, his mighty first-born, but me he has slighted from a child as a weakling unfit to bear the shield and spear. Ah, cruel was your doom, my brother, yet here your sorrows cease, and nothing can touch you further. But a harder lot is mine, who must henceforth walk the world friendless, eating my heart."

Now while Teucer lamented thus he heard footsteps at hand, and lifting up his eyes he saw Menelaus striding towards him, followed by his herald. The Spartan king glanced coldly on the prone, shrouded figure between them and said in loud, imperious

tones, "Hear me, you! Let none touch this corpse, but leave it where it lies."

"Wherefore? By whose command?" exclaimed Teucer, too much amazed to heed the discourtesy of this address.

"By *my* command," haughtily rejoined Menelaus, "and by my royal brother's also, whose word is law to the whole Greek armament."

"But your reason?" cried Teucer, still hardly trusting his ears.

"We are accountable to none," said Menelaus pompously; "nevertheless, that our justice may be established beyond cavil, I will set forth to you the the grounds of this our sentence. Firstly, then, this dead man was a rebel and a mutineer; enlisted under our banner, he defied and set at nought his general, refusing with contumely to submit to his jurisdiction in a matter of grave moment—the awarding of the meed of valour. Next, he plotted against us a deed more ferocious than our deadliest foes could have dreamed of; and but for divine interposition he would have murdered us—*we* should be lying even as he, for his guilt, lies now! Most justly, therefore, he is condemned to lie there unburied, deprived of the last rites, exposed to the foulest indignities, a prey to carrion birds and to dogs. For living, he escaped the retribution of his crime; but dead, he shall yet suffer the worst we can inflict. Neither let any man deem this our private vengeance; for as rebel, as destroyer of the common goods, as would-be murderer, Ajax hath triply incurred the name and punishment

of a public enemy. And how, but by rigorous chastisement of such, shall kings hold the unruly many in subjection, whether in the city or the tented field? I have spoken; you, Teucer, lay my words to heart if you be wise, and take a warning thereto, that if you dare to dig a grave for Ajax, it is like to prove your own."

During this harangue, Teucer, white to the lips with rage, stood quivering like a hound in the leash, and seemed more than once at the point to hurl himself upon the speaker. Yet he heard him out; and not until Menelaus paused with a self-satisfied air, as who should say, "*How's that for eloquence?*" did he burst forth in accents of intense scorn:

"I had thought shameless lying the vice of base-born churls, but I see now it is a prerogative of royal blood. Now hear *me*, Menelaus, for I will be heard. I fling your false words in your teeth, windy braggart that you are! *You* to talk of Ajax as your liegeman—rebellious against your authority! As if, forsooth, aught bound him to fight your battles save the old Covenant of the Princes—as if he came not hither your free, equal ally! Your peer in rank, I say, and in all but rank heaven-high above you. For who and what *you* are, we all know—Agamemnon's shadow, Agamemnon's picture, no more. Without him at your back, little would any reck of your bluster and your goodly outward seeming. Nay, never bend your brows at me, man—I am no child to be frighted with a lion's skin! Ay, go and fetch your brother hither—let him bring *his* herald too, to look more royal; but know that were he twice a king

and twice as powerful, he should not stay me from burying this my dead."

"You shall pay me for this," snarled Menelaus, trembling with fury; and he turned on his heel and strode off, beckoning his herald to follow.

As they disappeared round the bend of the shore, Tecmessa glided out of the wood with her child in her arms.

"I overheard him, Teucer," she said—"the black-hearted tyrant! Ah, you daunted him for the moment—I saw him quail under your gaze like the coward he is. But now he will bring Agamemnon and his guards to overpower you—this is what I feared would befall when I heard the sons of Atreus were on their way hither!"

"So you came to warn me," said Teucer; "but you would have done better, Tecmessa, to remember my bidding. Either you or our liegemen are much to blame for letting the news get abroad that Ajax was dead."

"But we did not, believe me," said Tecmessa earnestly; "not one of us would have revealed it for our lives. The whole camp knew it already when I returned to our quarters—none could say whence or how the report arose, but Calchas was heard to declare it was one of those divine rumours that oftentimes spread some great tidings abroad ere they could be known by mortal means. Howe'er that be, I made haste to bring the child here, for his helplessness shall be our defence!" She placed the babe on a corner of the veil that shrouded his dead father, and seating herself beside him, put a dark tress of hair

intertwined with a short, fair curl into his small hand. "See the supppliant," she said, "bearing locks of his hair and mine—the consecrated offering of mourners—in lieu of the sacred badge of the fleecy fillet. He plays therewith, the innocent, and knows not the holy power that is in him while he sits thus. Still—sit still, my babe; for not the most impious man alive would dare lay hand on you, or him you guard, so fearful is the curse that rests for ever on those who violate a suppliant!"

Even as she spoke, Agamemnon was seen advancing at the head of an armed retinue. The King stalked majestically up to Teucer, who stood watchful and alert before the corse; and heavily frowning, said:

"Is it *you* of whom I hear this insolence—son of a foreign slavewoman? Fit champion, truly, of one whose last estate is low as your beginning! And who, or what, I pray you, was this man you brag of as too exalted to be subject to my sway? What did Ajax ever do that a hundred others—myself among them—have not done as often and as well on the field of war? Because by all but universal suffrage of the Greeks noble Odysseus was preferred before him, are the sons of Atreus to endure henceforward the calumnies and revilings of Teucer the base-born? Know your place better, serf, or you shall taste of a serf's schooling; and if grievance you have, offend not our ears with your alien's gibberish, but plead by the mouth of some free and true-born Greek."

"I am not so simple, Agamemnon," answered Teucer steadily, "as to let you put me in the wrong by provoking me to violence. And least of all am I

to be moved by taunts like these. For who knows not that my mother was Hesione, King Priam's sister, whom great Heracles assigned to Telamon as the prize of honour in the day those heroes took Troy? Slave-born I am, if the son of a captive princess be such; an alien, too, by the mother's side; but *that* reproach comes strangely from you, who had Lydian Pelops for grandsire and for mother Cretan Aerope of infamous memory. No, little reck I of your baseless insults, save those that touch upon the dead. O, Ajax, Ajax, to see how brief a thing is mortal gratitude! To hear this thankless King belittle the man who fought and bled in his cause—who bore the brunt of Hector's deadly onslaught while *he* —skulked to his ships!"

At these words the enraged King plucked his sword halfway from the scabbard, and now had some fatal mischief befallen but for the timely advent of Odysseus. Out of the wood he came with his swift, gliding step, gave one quick glance around, and calmly said:

"What is this, my friends? Did I hear royal Agamemnon's voice uplifted in wrath—though he stands I see, in the hallowed presence of the fallen brave?"

The King sheathed his sword and answered with abashed mien, "You would excuse me, wise prince, if you had heard how this Teucer goaded me with insults."

"I can excuse the man who repays hard words with harder," rejoined Odysseus, meaningly.

"O, he had some from me, I do not deny it," said Agamemnon, "but not more than he had earned.

For—think of it, Odysseus!—the upstart has declared he will give Ajax honourable interment, in defiance of my sovereign edict!"

"Touching that same decree," said Odysseus, "may a friend speak his mind to you honestly without forfeiting your goodwill?"

"Surely," replied Agamemnon, graciously, "else were I the veriest fool, for I count you the best and truest friend I have among all the Greeks, son of Laertes."

"Hear me, then," resumed the other; "for the love of the gods, do not persist in your intent to dishonour this dead man—do not let rancour urge you beyond the bounds of righteousness! You could not hate him worse than I did—he was *my* rival, not yours; but as far as in me lies I will do him justice. I say he was the best of us all, Achilles alone excepted. And I bid you beware how you offer outrage or indignity to his relics; for Ajax is beyond the reach of malice, and not to him but to the eternal law of the gods will you do violence thereby."

"Little I thought," exclaimed the King, "that I should live to hear Odysseus champion his worst foe—and against *me!* Can I have heard you aright—are you indeed fain to see *this* man laid to rest with funeral honours? But do you not remember that he sought to murder you?"

"I remember this," answered Odysseus, "that some day I too shall need a grave. And I count it the wise man's part to do unto others as he would have them do unto him. Neither should I deserve to be called your friend, son of Atreus, if I did not warn you against taking an impious revenge. Be

persuaded, then; to yield to one who counsels for your own good is no defeat."

"You shall have your will, Odysseus," replied Agamemnon after a moment's pause, "for to you I would not grudge a greater favour. Deal as you list in this matter; but for my own part I avow myself the implacable foe of him yonder, in death as in life."

Having thus spoken, he went his way with his retainers.

But Odysseus turned him to Teucer, who stood meanwhile like a trusty warder at his post, with his bow bent in his hand. "Brother of Ajax," he said, "let us be friends henceforward, and suffer me to join in paying him the last honours, in token of reconcilement."

"I pray you pardon me, noble Odysseus," answered Teucer—"for noble I needs must call you, who have proved yourself generous-minded beyond my thought of you. Deem me not ungrateful—but I cannot accept your courtesy. Ajax could not rest quiet in his grave if *your* hands helped to lay him there. And though it may be I have misjudged you—as the spirit you have now shown almost persuades me—yet friend of mine you can never be while I remember how my brother died. Peace between us if you will, but nothing more!"

"That must content me, then," replied Odysseus gently and sadly. "I leave you, Teucer, since the homage I fain would pay is unwelcome to your faithful soul."

With that he departed, sighing as he went. And now the men of Salamis drew near in mournful procession, and Teucer bent him to his piteous task.

How the Greeks sent after Philoctetes the Bowman

When these things were come to pass the Trojans had respite for a season, because the Greeks had no heart for the work of war, seeing themselves bereaved of their two mightest champions. And even more heavily than the loss of godlike Achilles did the fate of Ajax weigh down their spirits; for few of the chiefs

could think thereon without self-reproach, and to the commonalty it seemed a manifest token that some curse from the gods pursued the enemies of sacred Troy.

In this gloomy posture of affairs Agamemnon had recourse to Calchas the Seer, and besought him to devise some means of reviving hope and courage among the host, before worse should come of their sullen despondency. And the Seer bade him convene a general assembly of chiefs and folk; which being done he came into the midst and thus addressed them:

"Be it known unto you, princes and people of the Greeks, that the wrath of the gods, and specially mighty Athena, has been kindled against none of us, but against Ajax only. And it fell on him for this cause, that twice he sinned against them with his lips, through insensate pride. For when he embarked for this war, the good Telamon exhorted him, saying, 'So fight, my son, as one resolved to conquer by the help of the gods'; but the young man answered in his folly, 'Nay, father, let the gods help those that cannot help themselves. But I will conquer by valour and the spear.' And yet again, in our first great battle with the Trojans, Ajax spake impious words, when the strong daughter of Zeus vouchsafed to appear to him and his men, urging them on; for he answered her chidingly, 'What needs this, Queen Athena? Go, play the captain to others of the Greeks; as for me and mine, we know how to hold our own better than you can teach us.' So when the day of reckoning was fully come, the mindful goddess repaid these words with usury, in the manner we have

seen. But to the rest of us, and to pious Odysseus above all, she remains a very present help; wherefore let us thank her and take courage."

Thus Calchas strove to hearten the folk, and they heard him gladly; yet murmurs arose among the clansmen of Achilles: "It is but lost labour that we abide here now our lord is passed away. The oracle! What says the seer to the ancient oracle that Troy shall not be taken save by a prince of the house of Peleus?"

Then cried Calchas, pointing seaward with his staff, "There is my answer, Myrmidons! Mark you that ship flying hitherward over the waves? She comes from the isle of Scyros, bringing us the young son of Achilles! For soon as the godlike hero passed, Agamemnon, by my counsel, privily sent a trusty messenger to fetch the lad—even the agéd Phoenix, henchman of Peleus, whom Achilles called foster-father."

Then all the Greeks were glad, but the more part were astonished, not knowing that Achilles had a son born to him in Scyros. But so it was, for ere he departed thence he wooed and wedded the king's daughter, whose loved playmate he had been in his disguise of maiden. And she, left a mourning bride in her father's house, bore in due time a son, whom she called Neoptolemus, which is being interpreted *Novice in War*, because Thetis foretold at his birth that he should win a great victory as a warrior yet untried.

Now when the ship came in, a golden-haired lad was the first to leap ashore, whom the Myrmidons

greeted with tears of joy, so like he was to their lost chief. Then Agamemnon and all the princes gave him welcome also; and the host passed that day merrily, with sacrifices of thanksgiving and with feasting, because the gods had raised up a new Achilles for the overthrow of Troy. Moreover, Odysseus, prompted by his own far-seeing mind, brought the arms of Achilles, and gave them to Neoptolemus in sight of all, saying, "The gods forbid that I should keep these now; for they are yours by right of inheritance." Whereby he earned the applause of every man, and made Neoptolemus a firm friend from that hour.

So the Greeks went to rest that night well content and filled with high hopes for the morrow, when, as they promised themselves, they were to follow the son of Achilles to victory; but the gods willed otherwise.

Now while others slept, Odysseus armed himself and went forth alone towards Troy; for the night was moonless, and whenever he had cover of darkness, he loved to prowl and forage round the city; stealthy as a cat he walked, and like a cat, men said, he could see as well by night as by day. No spy in all the host was at once so wily and so daring, or gleaned so much of the doings of the besieged. More than once he had waylaid a Trojan scout, forced intelligence from him, and then done him to death; but his friends whispered that he always carried with him a stronger weapon than his sword—a well-filled purse, to wit– and held secret intercourse with certain traitorous citizens whom his gold had corrupted.

Be that as it may, on this night Odysseus was to

learn momentous tidings by good luck alone. For as he approached the city by the road that led from Ida, he overtook and seized a youth whom he recognised as a son of Priam, Helenus by name. Now Helenus was frail of body, and no warrior, but a priest and soothsayer; one, moreover, reputed to know better than any man the ancient secret oracles concerning Troy. And Odysseus, holding a dagger to his throat, threatened him with present death unless he revealed how the city might be taken. Then said the youth, half fainting with terror, "Swear to me by your gods, Odysseus, to let me go unharmed if I tell you."

"I swear it by Zeus and Athena," replied Odysseus, with a grim smile, "for I can wait to kill you under your mother's eyes, my pretty lad, and in your burning home."

"There are three things, then," said Helenus, shuddering, "that the Greeks must have before our city can fall. A leader sprung from Peleus; the Bow of Heracles; and the Luck of Troy—the ancient image of Athena that we call the Palladium. The son of Achilles, I know, is come to you this day; but he can avail you nothing without those other things."

"Say you so?" answered Odysseus. "Well, the Bow of Heracles is in a place I wot of; but tell me, where keep you your Palladium?"

"That secret," said Helenus, "not the fear of death shall wring from me, coward though I am. Alas, I have betrayed my country—but false to my solemn oath I will not be!"

"Neither will I," said Odysseus, "so you are safe, boy—until we meet again. Go, for you have said

enough to set me guessing—and I seldom guess wrong, Helenus, though I am not a diviner, like you."

With that he turned, and made straight for the camp, muttering to himself as he went—"Ay, their Palladium, their Little Pallas—they told me only the King and a few priests know where it is kept. So Helenus is in the secret; bound by a solemn oath; maybe has charge of it—a priest of the blood royal, who more likely? Then what makes he outside the city—stealing home, it seems, from Ida? *Ida!* What if the Trojans have bethought them to hide their Luck up there, where we should never think of looking for it? I warrant 'tis so—and I shall find it, I shall find it, my friends, though I dig down the mountain! But first we will set about the easier task—we will fetch the Bow of Heracles."

. . . . . .

Three mornings thereafter, Odysseus was standing on the white cliffs of a lone mountain island with Neoptolemus at his side. Behind the narrow, grassy plateau where they stood, the craggy hillside rose abruptly, tufted with dark, low-growing stone-pines, and mantled here and there with the yellow or scarlet cistus. Four or five of the Myrmidons leaned silently on their spears at either end of the plateau, like sentinels on guard, intently watching both approaches to the spot. There was no motion in the warm, aromatic air; no sound of life arose from the isle; only the faint lapping of waves far below broke the death-like stillness.

"So this is Lemnos!" said Neoptolemus with a sigh. "I had not thought it was such an utter solitude. Not even a fisherman's hut. Odysseus—

has he *no one?* And here ten years—gods, it is too horrible!"

"He has the wild goats and the sea-birds," answered his companion, shrugging his shoulders, "other inhabitants there are none; but what would you? As I have told you already, his affliction renders Philoctetes unfit to mingle with his kind, and we abandoned him here for that very cause. It is like your generous heart to pity him, but had you heard him making night and day hideous with screams and imprecations in the torments of his malady, you would not blame us. But let us lose no time; were he to see *me*, it would ruin all. I will but make sure he is still here—alive, then leave you to do the rest."

"We have searched the whole isle," began Neoptolemus—

"Yes," interrupted Odysseus, whose keen eyes had been scanning the hillside, "and here our search ends, for I think I see his lair. Look up yonder, where sunlight is streaming from that low-browed opening in the rocks, and yet you cannot see the sky beyond. That must be a cavern with two entrances, facing the east and west—the very place to keep him warm in winter and cool in summer—sure to have a spring too, handy for his needs! Go up and look, Neoptolemus; but tread quietly—he may be sleeping within."

The youth went lightly up the steep, rocky slope, peered warily into the cave and entered; in a moment or two he reappeared and sprang down to Odysseus' side.

"There is no one there," he said; "but I saw a bed of leaves, and some wretched cooking gear by the

embers of a fire—and a handful of soiled rags steeping in a crock of water——"

"Ah, dressings for his foot," said the other quickly. "'Tis as I thought, then; and he cannot have gone far, crippled as he is. Now, mark me: you and your men must await his return; I go back to the ship, but if you are long delayed I shall send one of the crew to—help on the business. The man will pretend to be a trader, and to have tidings for you; you must seem to believe what he will tell you, and act thereon as occasion requires. As for the tale you are to tell Philoctetes, I trust you are perfect in that?"

"I have it by heart, thanks to your lessoning," replied the youth somewhat impatiently. "But hear me a moment, Odysseus—the falsehood of it revolts me. I do not know that I can go through with this scheme of yours. Why must we deceive Philoctetes at all? Why not frankly tell him we are come to take him to Troy because he owns the Bow of Heracles whereby the Greeks are destined to conquer?"

"Impossible," answered Odysseus curtly. "I know the man, and the bitter hatred he must bear us all. We shall never get him aboard our ship, I tell you, except by trickery."

"I loathe trickery!" exclaimed Neoptolemus, hotly. "If I cannot persuade him, I had rather bring him on board by force. That should be easy enough, when we are ten strong men against one poor cripple."

"Not when the cripple wields the weapons of Heracles," said Odysseus. "You talk folly, Neoptolemus; not knowing, it seems, that this Bow has a magic in it that makes the bearer invincible, and the touch

of the arrows is death. Now hearken! Your scruples are honourable, and worthy of your father's son—but they come too late. When our chiefs entrusted this quest to me and I chose you for comrade, did you not swear before them all to help me to the uttermost? Fail me, then, if you list; leave me to fulfil this task alone—as I will, or die in the attempt; but never show your face again among the Greeks, if they are to hear that the son of Achilles is a recreant and a perjurer."

"I am not—no man shall say so," cried Neoptolemus passionately. "I will keep faith with you, Odysseus, though your bidding goes sore against my conscience."

"Then good speed to you, prince," said Odysseus, smiling as he turned to go, "and remember, I pray you, that only fools stick at doing a trifling evil that great good may come."

Neoptolemus watched him out of sight with a frown on his fair young face; then he beckoned his guard of Myrmidons to him and spoke with them awhile in low earnest tones. And while they talked together a hoarse voice cried from above:

"Strangers, all hail! Welcome, whoe'er you be, that bless my eyes with sight of human faces!"

At that they looked up quickly, and saw a man standing in the mouth of the cave, leaning on what seemed a staff, but was in truth a huge, unstrung bow.

"All hail!" he cried again, and began limping painfully down to them, supporting himself with the bow. His form seemed that of a man in his prime, but his matted hair and beard were flecked with grey, and his weather-beaten face was lined as with

age; his single garment hung about him in tatters; one foot was swathed in bandages streaked with blackish-green stains. Having reached the level he drew a deep breath, scanning the silent group with eyes feverishly bright; then suddenly, "You are Greeks," he exclaimed, "or I am the more deceived! O speak to me, friends—let me hear my own tongue again at last—at last!"

"Assuredly we are Greeks," replied Neoptolemus, regarding him compassionately.

"Ah, the dear sound of it!" cried the man with a laugh that was half a sob, "every syllable music to my ear! Say on, fair youth; tell me your name and parentage; whence you come, whither you are bound—and what blessèd chance brings you to this unfrequented isle?"

Then said the youth, casting down his eyes, "I am Neoptolemus, son of Achilles. I come from the Greek camp at Troy, and am bound for Scyros, my home. We have put in at Lemnos for—for water."

"And do I indeed see the child of divine Achilles, the fosterling of my guest-friend the King of Scyros?" said the other; "give me your hand, dear lad—a joy beyond words is the sight of you, a boon beyond hope! But how say you, that you come from our camp at Troy? Then the war still lingers on—how little we dreamed of this when we sailed all confident of speedy victory!"

"You were of the fleet, it seems," said Neoptolemus; "pray you, what is *your* name?"

"Why, I am Philoctetes," said the castaway. "Surely you knew that, knowing this is Lemnos?

You shake your head—you never heard of me? Ah, accursèd sons of Atreus and thrice accursèd Odysseus, this is *your* work! Was it not enough to consign me to this living tomb, but you must bury my very name in oblivion? The gods do so to you and more also, ye hearts of stone!"

He raised his clenched hands to heaven with a fierce gesture, and sank down upon the greensward trembling from head to foot.

"Some great wrong moves you thus, Philoctetes," said Neoptolemus gently; "whatever it be, I pity you from my soul. Can you, without too much pain, tell me the nature of it? I would fain learn—but I fear you are overwrought——"

"Nay, I will be calm," said Philoctetes, raising himself; "sit beside me, kind and dear prince, and I will tell you all—it will ease my heart. As you may know, the Greek fleet touched at divers places before reaching Troy; one was a small, desert isle where we sought harbourage in a storm. Now there was an ancient shrine there, having the name CHRYSE engraved over the portal; and some of our sailors were much afraid when they saw it; because, said they, Chryse was a goddess of the islanders in those seas, most powerful and malign, whose sanctuary none dare enter or even approach, except the priests. So the rest kept aloof from it; but I, in my foolhardiness deeming lightly of a goddess of barbarians, must needs go in to see what might be seen. And I saw neither image nor altar within, only a rude pillar of black stone anointed with oil, and a great bowl of milk and honey set before it. But as I turned to go,

I trod unawares on something alive—it was a black snake, and like lightning he struck his fangs into my foot. I rushed back to my comrades half mad with terror and pain, and they did for me what they could, but neither leechcraft nor spells could allay that fell poison. From that day to this the unstanched festering wound has racked me with pangs that abate for a while—else must I have died long since—only to renew themselves in more cruel violence.

"Now would you think, Neoptolemus, that any born of woman could have the heart to add to misery such as this? I tell you, savage beasts would have shown me more mercy than did those brother kings and Odysseus! Next after Chryse's Isle, we touched at Lemnos, where the Seer Calchas bade us land and offer sacrifice to Hephaestus the Smith-God, from whose forge arises the flame and smoke that are oft-times seen on yon mountain-peak. Then, while the sacrifice was offering, a paroxysm of my torment seized me—I should have told you that after each of these comes a brief, deep trance—and when it passed I lay like one dead upon the shore. And when I came to myself I saw the whole fleet in full sail to the eastward, the black ship of Odysseus hindmost, and that was the only one still within hail. I shouted, I screamed—and I was answered. The cruel villain himself, whom I could clearly see upon the stern, called out some mockery of farewell; some lying plea that Agamemnon durst not carry me further lest one so manifestly under a curse should bring pollution upon all the host. Then for a time I became a madman; how long it was before I regained my

wits I know not; but ever since my daily prayer has been for Death to come and take me—and he, too, will not heed!"

"But has no ship visited Lemnos all these years?" asked Neoptolemus; "no roving trader or the like?"

"There is but ill harbourage here," answered Philoctetes evasively; "stress of weather has brought two or three crews that gave me alms of food and clothing—but they would not cumber themselves with a sick man. And though they promised to bear news of my plight to my father's house in Trachis, either they kept not faith with me or else the old man is no more, for succour has never come. Belike those others would not rescue me for fear of the Greek commanders—but you, son of Achilles, you will not let friendship for your allies hinder you from taking me hence?"

"Fear not that, Philoctetes," replied Neoptolemus, "for I have renounced alliance with the Greeks, and hold the brother kings and Odysseus, their counsellor, my worst enemies. Good cause have I to hate them no less than you do, since they have despoiled me of my dead father's god-wrought arms."

"Woe is me," exclaimed Philoctetes, "has Achilles fallen? And how—surely by no mortal foeman's prowess?"

"By the hand of Paris," said Neoptolemus, "but as we hear, Apollo himself gave and guided the shaft. Then, directed by an oracle, the Greek chiefs sent for me, with many false and flattering messages; but when I came to them, I found they had bestowed the arms, my rightful heritage, on Odysseus as a meed of valour; neither would they nor he restore

them for all my pleading. Nay, Odysseus added insult to wrong, taunting me as a callow stripling unfit to possess the weapons of a warrior."

"That was like him, the shameless dog," said Philoctetes. "But where then was gallant Ajax?—where was Patroclus, your father's other self? *They* would never suffer you to be thus foully wronged."

"I saw them not," answered the youth sadly, "only their graves beside the sea."

"Alas, have they likewise perished?" cried Philoctetes; "these are heavy tidings indeed. But there was another who should have seen you righted—lives not the good old Nestor, my father's friend and mine?"

"He lives," said Neoptolemus, "but in such evil case that he can little heed another man's woes. The death of his beloved Antilochus sits heavy at his heart."

"Antilochus too!" said Philoctetes bitterly; "now would not this tempt the most pious to doubt if there be any justice in heaven? These four, so noble, so upright of soul, cut off in their flower; while the base and treacherous prosper and prevail! Look to it, Olympians, lest men fain to adore the Divine be yet driven to renounce such gods as you!"

At that moment one of the Myrmidons touched Neoptolemus on the arm saying, "My prince, yonder comes one of our crew, and a stranger with him. Is it your pleasure they should approach, or shall we bid them wait awhile?"

"Let them come near," said Neoptolemus, "they may bring some message from our ship's captain. But who can the stranger be? He looks like a trader, and one that is well to pass."

The elder of the two newcomers was indeed habited with some richness, wearing a large fur mantle in place of the ordinary seaman's coarse cloak; the dirk at his belt had a jewelled haft, the belt itself was of fine scarlet leather clasped with gold, and heavy gold rings were in his ears. He signed to his companion to remain at a distance, walked quickly up to Neoptolemus, and gravely saluted him.

"Hail, son of Achilles," he said; "I have seen your face in the Greek camp, though mine is strange to you, and I recognised the ensign of your ship as I passed her lying at anchor just now. So I brought my barque to land that I might give you a friendly warning. Believe me, prince, you will do wisely to quit Lemnos without an instant's delay."

"Stranger," said Neoptolemus, "I thank you for your good intent, but I must hear who you are and what this means."

"I am a trader of the isle Peparethos," replied the other, "captain of my own vessel, and now sailing her home from Troy. When I loosed thence it was the talk of the Greek camp how that Phoenix and Diomed were going forthwith to Scyros to bring you back by force if need be, because of the prophecy that you shall take the city."

"They will use force, will they?" exclaimed the youth. "Let them try it. I ask nothing better than to teach them a lesson! But—is Odysseus not with them? I marvel *he* was not chosen leader of such an enterprise."

"He had other work on hand," answered the seeming trader, "and was about to set sail likewise in quest

of—some one else . . ." His voice sank to a whisper as he went on—"A word in your ear, son of Achilles. Know you who this lame man is?"

"Nay, speak aloud," said Neoptolemus, "this is the renowned archer, Philoctetes, and my good friend; whatever you have to tell me he shall hear also."

"In few words then," said the other, "Odysseus is even now on his way hither, having undertaken to bring Philoctetes to Troy or forfeit his head. I heard him swear it. Now I fear the cunning Ithacan; never man thwarts him, they say, that he does not hunt down like a tireless wolf until he destroys him in the end; but I cannot see one so young and noble fall into his clutches for want of a warning—and I trust to your honour not to betray me hereafter. Farewell, prince, for I must to sea again with all speed, and if you love freedom and safety, you will follow; brave as you are, you are no match for Odysseus and his wiles; and if he find you here, back to Troy you go, dead or alive."

So saying, the disguised messenger turned on his heel and strode rapidly away.

Now Neoptolemus was not subtle-witted, and it passed his understanding why Odysseus should have thus announced his coming and his design to Philoctetes. But the truth was that Odysseus feared the youth's scruples would return if he talked long with the unhappy castaway, and he foresaw that news of his own approach on such an errand would make Philoctetes eager to escape without further parley. Neoptolemus could not refuse to take him on board without betraying his confederate; to that

length he would never go; the victim would enter the trap of his own accord, and Odysseus would keep out of sight until he was safely embarked—then, ah, *then* he promised himself an hour of richest enjoyment!

Nothing of this did Neoptolemus comprehend, but it seemed plain to him that Odysseus for some reason desired his immediate return to the ship; he therefore turned to Philoctetes and said with an embarrassed air, "You hear, worthy friend? I must away instantly. The gods grant you deliverance from your sufferings—farewell."

"But you will not leave me here?" cried Philoctetes. "O, no, no, you could not have the heart! See, I kneel—I clasp your knees—you shall not shake me off. I am your suppliant, Neoptolemus, not to be repulsed without sacrilege. By Zeus, Guardian of Suppliants, by your father and your mother, by all you hold dear, I adjure you, have mercy on a helpless wretch—forsake me not in my extremity. Ah, you are loth to take me because of this foul malady—but I will be no trouble, none! I ask no tendance—only a corner in the hold—at the prow, anywhere. Your crew shall not complain of me, I will keep so quiet—they need never come near me except to throw me their broken victuals. See, see—these men look pityingly; ask them if they would not gladly suffer me on the ship—for such a little while! Hark you, friends, one day's sail brings you to Euboea, the nearest point of Greece; do but carry me so far, and I will make shift to reach home; fear not I will burden you all the way to Scyros."

The hardy Myrmidons were indeed visibly moved

by the castaway's passionate pleading; as for Neoptolemus, he turned his head aside lest Philoctetes should see the tears in his eyes, and said with feigned indifference, "What say you, my men? Myself, I am in doubt how best to act."

"Let us take the man with us, my prince," answered a grey-headed retainer; "it were the deed of barbarians to desert him in this plight; so say I, and so will all my comrades, I dare be sworn."

At these words Philoctetes uttered a joyful exclamation and half rose, stiffly and slowly; Neoptolemus gently helped him to his feet, then said to the Myrmidons:

"It is easier to make promises than to redeem them; and by all I hear of this sufferer, you would rue yours if he became our shipmate. Besides, we shall not abandon him to languish in this solitude, but to be straightway conveyed by Odysseus to the camp at Troy, where he will be sedulously cared for. The chiefs will vie with one another to heap on him marks of honour and regard——"

"Do you mock me, son of Achilles?" broke in Philoctetes, "or do you forget that the men of whom you speak left me here to die by inches rather than endure my presence? Nay, forgive me. I am over hasty; I have not thought to ask why Odysseus now comes to fetch me. Is it because remorse has touched the Greeks at last?"

An apter pupil of Odysseus would have answered yes; but in Neoptolemus the habit of truthful speech was too strong.

"The Greeks send for you," he blurted out, "be-

cause you have the Bow of Heracles, and a seer has revealed that Troy cannot be taken without it."

"Then by all the gods," said Philoctetes with blazing eyes, "I will linger out my days in torment here rather than let them have it. They have never wasted a thought on my long agony—well, I am avenged at last, that shall suffice me! Ay, I begin to see the gods are just, after all; my foes, too, shall know the sickness of hope deferred; their bones, like mine, shall bleach upon an alien strand; their names, like the name of Philoctetes, fade out of human memory unblest, unsung!"

Neoptolemus looked at him in deepening embarrassment.

"But when Odysseus comes," he began—

"He will find me forewarned and fore-armed," interrupted Philoctetes; "and woe betide him if he comes within bowshot. For I will no more spare him than I would the serpent that made me a loathly cripple."

And then, baffled at every turn, the youth saw nothing for it but to hurry on the deed of treachery.

"Philoctetes," he said, "I cannot leave you to perish in this wilderness. Since you are utterly purposed not to go to Troy, I *will* take you to Scyros. The King, my grandsire, will make you welcome, and together we will defend the isle against your foes and mine, though the whole Greek host should sail from Troy to capture us. Come, my men shall carry you down to the ship, for we have no time to lose."

"The gods reward you for this, true son of Achilles,"

said Philoctetes fervently, "even thus would *he* have spoken, and in you, methinks, his spirit lives again. Let us away—yet tarry a moment or two, while I fetch certain needments from my cave."

"Nay, spare yourself the trouble," answered Neoptolemus; "my ship is well found with everything that can minister to your comfort."

"But not with the thing I need most," said Philoctetes. "I have found a herb of the isle that assuages the burning pain in my foot, and had just brought in a fresh store of it when I heard your voices below. Pray you, let me fetch that—and I would make sure, also, that I have left none of my arrows in the cave by oversight." He pointed to the quiver hanging over his shoulder, and added, "The envenomed shafts of Heracles must not fall into some chance comer's hands—the merest scratch from one, and the Hydra-poison turns your blood to liquid flame!"

"Ah," said Neoptolemus with an eager look, "the shafts of Heracles—and this, doubtless, is the famous Bow! May I touch it—hold it, just a moment—if it is not asking too much?"

He blushed scarlet as he spoke; for the impulse had flashed through his mind to cut short this odious scene of deception by rushing away with the fateful weapons, if he were suffered to lay hands on them. But Philoctetes thought he blushed out of modesty, and loved him the more.

"Surely, surely, dear lad," he answered heartily, and held out both the bow and the quiver; "why, 'tis a little thing for *you* to ask, though more than I would grant to any I did not trust like a son. Here-

He thrust the weapons into the youth's hands

after you may boast of being the only mortal, save myself, to handle these sacred relics of the mightiest hero earth has seen. Quick, take them—I—I am ill at ease—let me alone—'twill pass——"

His voice died away in a stifled groan; he thrust the weapons into the youth's hands, and turned from him abruptly, staggering like a drunken man. Instantly Neoptolemus threw down the coveted prize and ran to support him.

"What is it, O what is it?" he cried affrightedly, "tell me what ails you—lean on me—gods, he is cold as ice! Philoctetes, speak, what can we do for you?"

But Philoctetes pushed him away, muttering hoarsely, "It is nothing, I tell you—let us make for the ships; quick, quick, we have delayed too long! I am well, I can walk alone, for pity's sake do not touch me." He reeled forward a few paces, moaning; then, convulsed in every limb, "It comes," he screamed, "the agony comes upon me! I can bear no more—my foot, my foot of fire! In mercy, boy, draw your sword and hew it off!" And with shriek upon shriek he fell writhing on the ground.

Pity and horror rooted Neoptolemus to the spot; not for all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them could he have left that tragic figure, and the desire to aid him was now single in his breast. At his command, two of the Myrmidons hastened to bring the bundle of herbs and a jar of fresh water from the cave; but Philoctetes uttered such frantic prayers not to be touched that his would-be helpers could only stand by and watch, as they thought, his death-

struggle. But gradually the throes that shook him abated, and his tense limbs relaxed; now he lay still, with great drops rolling from his clammy brow; and suddenly a trickle of dark blood oozed from the swathings about his foot.

"The worst is past," he faintly said; "come near, Neoptolemus, but do not lift me yet. The trance-slumber is stealing over me; it will be brief, but while it lasts I must lie here; to break it were death to me, so the physicians of the host declared. Now promise—for I need no oath from Achilles' son—promise you will not desert me in my sleep, nor suffer others to touch the weapons of Heracles."

"I do promise," replied Neoptolemus, "sleep tranquilly, poor friend, and may you awake restored!"

Philoctetes gave him a look of grateful trust; then closed his eyes, and instantly fell into a profound slumber.

"Now, were I Odysseus," thought Neoptolemus as he picked up the bow and quiver, "the rest would be easy. How would *he* upbraid me for letting slip this chance! But said word is thrall; if I stole away now, I were shamed for ever in my own sight."

He watched a while the quiet breathing of the sleeper, but presently bade his followers keep guard while he went to search the cave for the chance-fallen arrows whereof Philoctetes had spoken. And scarcely had he disappeared under the cavern-portal when Philoctetes opened his eyes, sat up, and looked about him broad awake.

"Where am I?" he said, "And who are these?" Then, rising to his feet, "Ah, I remember; kind

friends, you are with me still—then all is well. But where is your young prince ? "

" Here, Philoctetes," cried Neoptolemus, springing down the slope ; " I have been searching your cave for the arrows, but there are none. Why, you look bravely, man ; there is colour on your cheek and you hold yourself erect ! But is it well you should stand —are you wholly yourself again ? "

" I can not only stand but walk while this relief lasts," answered Philoctetes, " and so let us be going. I have delayed you too long already, but you shall see how fast I will hobble to your ship, dear, loyal-hearted lad ! Ah, who else would have borne with me so patiently in my frenzy, tarrying here to his own danger that he might save a poor lost wretch ? Never can I cease to bless you, never think of you or hear your name without a prayer that all-seeing Zeus may reward you a thousandfold."

These words, spoken with a smile of happy confidence, were more than Neoptolemus could bear.

" Philoctetes," he burst out, " I must and will tell you the truth ! It is not to Scyros I shall take you, but to Troy. All I said of my quarrel with the Greek chiefs was false ; I came here by their orders, to lure you back to them."

" You cannot mean it—you are jesting ! " exclaimed Philoctetes incredulously ; " yet no—your look tells me you are in bitter earnest. O gods, that such a face should mask deceit ! Take it hence—begone out of my sight ; give me those arms again, and get you back to those that sent you—fit mates for one so early versed in guile ! "

"Reproach me as you will," said Neoptolemus, "but hear me yet a moment. In honest faith, Philoctetes, I tell you the fraud we purposed was for your own good no less than ours. For inspired Calchas declares that not only shall Troy be conquered by you and me together, but you shall be healed there of your grievous wound. Be persuaded, then; forgive and forget things past, and come with me to the camp."

"Never!" fiercely replied the other, "not if the Seer promised me to take fifty Troys; not if I might be made whole the instant this foot touched Trojan soil. Urge me no more, but give me the bow and quiver, and get you gone."

He reached forth his hand as he spoke, but Neoptolemus drew back quickly and said:

"Nay, these go with me, for I cannot disobey the behest of our chiefs."

"O viper, O dissembling fiend!" shouted Philoctetes, "you have undone me—robbed me of all by vilest trickery. O master-villain, was it for this you feigned compassion and won my trust?"

Then, as Neoptolemus stood silent, "But you will not, you cannot do this thing," he went on in beseeching tones, "for listen, it is life itself you would take from me. I have no food but the wild goats and sea-birds I shoot—without my bow I should perish of hunger. By the gods of your fathers, I implore you, son of Achilles! For the love of mercy, give me the bow again! What, not a word? No answer but that cold, inexorable gaze? . . . O, he is deafer to entreaty than these rocks, silent witnesses of my long anguish and now of a woe beyond it all! . . . Is it pride in

his triumph that keeps him mute? Alas, he knows not 'tis but a poor corpse he hath despoiled, a shadow, a strengthless phantom that once was Philoctetes. . . . Child, even now be true to your better self! Only restore my arms, and I acquit you of all blame; I will not hold you to your word that you would take me to Scyros. . . . . Ah me, unhappy, am I so scorned, so abject, that not a man here will heed these prayers, these tears? Then let me creep to shelter like a wounded beast, and wait death in my lair. Aidless, alone, in the lingering tortures of famine, I will curse with my last breath this boy whose guileless looks have murdered me."

So saying, he turned and made shift to limp a few paces upward; but lacking the bow to support him, he slipped on the hillside, and lay there prone, muttering and moaning.

All this while Neoptolemus had stood like one fixed in thought, gripping the bow and quiver in either hand. No sign of his inward struggle had escaped him; and the Myrmidons, watching his impassive face, had not dared to betray their growing uneasiness at what they heard. But when Philoctetes uttered his threat of cursing their prince, they shuddered; and the same grey-haired henchman who before had spoken for the rest now ventured to come forward.

"My prince," said he, "we all served your father long; his word was our law, and so shall yours be. Are we to make for the ship now, or will you suffer us first to hand yonder man what he craves?"

"That is my desire!" exclaimed Neoptolemus, "but I am in a great strait, my men. I am caught in a

web of double-dealing—whatever I do now, I must be forsworn. O, why did I ever leave Scyros ? "

" Ah, son of Achilles," cried Philoctetes, rising with outstretched arms, " this shows me I have wronged you. You are not base of soul ; you have but hearkened to evil counsellors. But listen now to your own heart ! Does it not tell you that to break whatever pledge you gave the Greeks is a light thing beside the infamy of robbing a forlorn, helpless wretch that trusted you ? Give me my own again, I say, or never hope to be at peace ! "

" What shall I do, men ? " said the youth irresolutely. The Myrmidons were silent, but he read their answer in their looks, and had taken one step towards Philoctetes when a voice behind him thundered, " Hold, perfidious boy ! Is it thus you keep faith with the Greeks ? In their name I forbid you to give up those arms ! "

" Odysseus here ? " shrieked Philoctetes, starting back ; " Ay, 'tis himself ! *His* the plot—I might have known it ! "

Odysseus in sooth it was who had drawn near unmarked, and now confronted Neoptolemus with lowering brow and a menacing gleam in his cold, light eyes. " You have reckoned without *me*," he said in a grating voice ; and turning to Philoctetes, " Yes, bowman, mine was the plot, I avouch it—and mine is the prize ! If this waverer thinks me the man to forego what I have won, you, knowing me of old, can tell him he is in error."

" Detested villain," said Philoctetes fiercely, " blot and bane of humankind, too well I know you ! What,

you come, do you, to gloat over the wreck you have made me—and no bolt from Olympus strikes down that front of brass! O master-stroke of wickedness, to make the son of noble Achilles your tool and cats-paw—to warp his young, ingenuous mind with your accurséd sophistries! But in that you have failed, you viper, for he pities me—I have felt it all along—and abhors the task you set him. Speak, Neoptolemus, and tell my persecutor you will not rob his victim, nor shall he!"

"Rather be silent, Neoptolemus," said Odysseus, quickly, "and think on your oath to the Greeks. As for you, Philoctetes, you may rail your fill at me on the ship, and at Troy too, for aught I care. Perhaps I may then find leisure to answer you, but meanwhile let us get you on board without more ado."

So saying, he advanced to lay hold on Philoctetes; but with the strength of despair the cripple made a bound past him and dragged himself swiftly toward the edge of the cliff, crying, "You take me not alive! Sooner will I dash out my brains on the rocks below!"

"Seize him, men!" shouted Odysseus and Neoptolemus in one breath; and two of the Myrmidons, rushing forward, threw their arms round him just in time to prevent him flinging himself headlong from the ledge.

Philoctetes struggled for a moment, then yielded to their strong but not unkindly grasp, and when they had half led, half carried him back to the two chiefs, he sank exhausted on a mossy boulder.

"You see to what you may drive him, Odysseus," said Neoptolemus, deeply moved; "now I warn you fairly, I will not suffer you to lay a finger on him.

Come what may, his blood shall not be on my head!"

"Have your own way as to that," answered Odysseus carelessly, "for now I bethink me, 'tis all one whether he goes with us or not. For the Bow of Heracles must conquer Troy, whoever draws it; and why should not the glory this headstrong fellow renounces fall to one of our skilled bowmen—myself, for instance?"

"Vile hound!" exclaimed Philoctetes, "*you* dare to wield that Bow? *You*, master of the weapons Heracles gave into my keeping with his last breath?"

"Even so," replied Odysseus coolly, "if Teucer, our best archer, claim them not. Putting him aside, I have not my match as a marksman in all the host, though I say it. Farewell, then, Philoctetes, son of Poias; you are welcome, for my part, to enjoy this fair island realm of yours. Range over it henceforth at your ease—none will come any more to trouble you, be well assured!"

Thus far he spoke lightly, with a mocking smile; but suddenly wheeling on Neoptolemus he bent on him an intense, compelling gaze, and spoke in tones of grave authority. "Come, son of Achilles," he said, "our task here is done. It is full time we were on our way to render account to our chiefs and comrades in arms of the mission they laid upon us—and to show them how well we have redeemed our solemn pledges."

Not waiting reply, he turned and strode along the way he had come, and Neoptolemus followed him some paces like one dazed, until an exceeding bitter cry broke from Philoctetes—"O misery, will he leave me thus with never a word? Speak to me, Neoptole-

mus, bid me at least farewell—ah, speak once more, ere the awful silence closes round me again!"

And at that Neoptolemus caught Odysseus by the sleeve and said, "Tarry, son of Laertes, for I cannot abandon this man without one more effort to save him. Hear me, Philoctetes! I am unskilled to persuade or plead, but this I will do—I will give you time to reflect, alone and calmly, in the hope that you may yet see the unreason of your stubbornness. So now I go with Odysseus to the ship, to bid our crew have all in readiness for sailing and to offer along with them sacrifice and prayers for a speedy voyage; then, in about an hour's space, I will return to hear your last word, whether it be yea or nay. And that you may know I will return without fail, these my followers shall bide here meanwhile."

Having said this firmly and with a steadfast countenance, the youth set forward at a round pace, heedless of the complaints and expostulations which Odysseus poured into his ear as they went along.

Philoctetes watched them out of sight in silence; then with a heavy sigh, "Friends," he said to the Myrmidons, "this is well meant of your young lord, but 'tis in vain. What knows he, a boy, of the iron that enters a man's soul in such exile as mine? Now, deem me not churlish if I leave you; I am sorely spent, and fain would rest in the coolness of my cave."

With that he took his slow way uphill; and the Myrmidons sat them down wherever boulder or shrub made a patch of shade, for by this it was high noon, and isle and sea lay hushed and shimmering in the full blaze of the midsummer sun.

For about an hour they had kept drowsy watch when suddenly they beheld Neoptolemus running towards them, fleet as a stag, still bearing the quiver and the bow.

"Where is he?" he asked, halting and glancing eagerly round.

"Resting yonder," answered the Myrmidons, pointing to the cave, and in an instant Neoptolemus had bounded half-way up the slope, calling Philoctetes loudly by name.

"Halt! No nearer!" cried the castaway, stepping forth; "if you mean not some new treachery, speak from where you stand."

"I mean none, by high and holy Zeus," said the youth, and stood still; "I bring you proof of that—but first I ask you for the last time, will you not relent and come to Troy?"

"And I answer, *No*—a thousand times no!" said Philoctetes angrily. "You have tormented me enough—go, I will not hear another word."

"Then take back these," said Neoptolemus, and held out the bow and quiver, "take them quickly—I gave Odysseus the slip, but he will not be long tracking me. Say you forgive me, Philoctetes, and let us part friends, since part we must."

But Philoctetes kept his place and answered bitterly, "You will not trick me twice, son of Achilles, with your fair words and frank looks. Even thus it was you beguiled me of these arms—do you think I can believe you now? Not so, this is some fresh snare!"

"It is true I deceived you basely," cried Neoptolemus, "but cannot you believe a man may repent his

fault and own it, and make amends—ay, cost him what it may? Ah, but you *shall!*"

He flung the weapons on the ground, and looking Philoctetes proudly in the face, "There!" he said, "take them up when I am gone, if you cannot trust yourself within my reach—to clasp hands in farewell."

And he turned away, but Philoctetes, touched to the heart, called out, "I will—I do trust you now," and hobbling down to him with what speed he could, flung himself into his arms with tears and blessings.

At that moment a roar like a wounded lion's rent the air and Odysseus appeared at the end of the plateau, sending his great voice before him in shouts of "Neoptolemus! Traitor! Come back!"

"I have you now, mine enemy," hissed Philoctetes; quick as thought he snatched up and strung the bow, fitted an arrow to the string, and was taking aim when Neoptolemus seized his arm crying, "No, not that—he is my comrade!"

"Unhand me," panted Philoctetes, striving to free himself, "balk me not of a just revenge."

But the youth only tightened his grasp, and meanwhile Oydsseus had caught sight of the pair and of the bended bow, and instantly retreated out of view.

"The coward is 'scaped," said Philoctetes regretfully; "you did ill to stay my hand, dearest boy; I would have ridded you, too, of a remorseless foe—for such will Odysseus be to you henceforward. And now, what will you do? You cannot return to Troy—"

"Unless, for my sake, you will go also," put in Neoptolemus.

"Ah, no more of that, if you love me," returned the other hastily; "I was about to say that the Greek leaders will hate you worse than any Trojan for this day's work, and I am right glad of it, for the false and vile should be the foes, not the friends, of noble Achilles' son. May the gods destroy them all root and branch, and their names become a hissing! But let us twain make for Scyros, even as you promised me; there you shall reign in peace over your own people, and none shall make you afraid, for I will dwell with you and the Bow shall be your sure defence. And when I die, it shall pass into your keeping, seeing you have proved yourself worthy to be made heir of Heracles."

"So let it be," answered Neoptolemus, after a brief pause, "for I see there is no other way." And giving his arm to Philoctetes he led him carefully down the rough hillside.

But scarcely had they reached the plateau once more when a deep, bell-like voice called from aloft, "Philoctetes, son of Poias, whither away?"

"The gods preserve us!" gasped Philoctetes, clutching the arm of his companion, "I should know that voice among a thousand—'tis Heracles calls me—and see, ah, see, yonder he stands!"

Awe-struck, Neoptolemus and the Myrmidons gazed in the direction of his upraised finger, and beheld, high on a shelving crag, the figure of a man garbed in a lion-skin. He seemed below middle height, but of mighty thews and sinews; majesty dwelt in his look and mien, and glory above the brightness of the sun shone round about him; yet was there somewhat in his

serene countenance that spoke to the beholders of conflicts passed and sorrows endured, insomuch that they felt this was no tearless, immutable Olympian, but one that had known like trials and passions with themselves.

"Philoctetes!" rang his mellow voice again, "whither go you with those arms of mine?"

"To Scyros," answered Philoctetes, tremulously; "but O, friend long-lost, by what miracle do you appear to me thus—not as the Dead are wont, thin-voiced, shadowy, but in all points your living self, save that celestial radiance transfigures you? Do I wake indeed, or is this but a mocking dream?"

"Be of good cheer, comrade," answered the shining Presence, "for I am very Heracles. It pleased Zeus that I should not pass to the dim shades of underground, but ascend bodily from my funeral pyre to dwell with him in bliss. And now I come by his command from the heavenly halls to charge you and this son of Achilles to sail not to Scyros—but to Troy. For so shall each of you accomplish his destiny, and the purpose of the high gods be fulfilled. Hearken now, heroes both—but first I speak to you, Philoctetes, to whom I spoke my last words with mortal breath. Remember how, when the fiery torment of the poisoned robe was consuming me, though friends and followers had heaped a pyre at my bidding and laid me writhing thereon, none but you found heart to kindle it and so put me from my pain. For that last service, I bade you take in possession the bow and arrows that had won me so many a victory, in so many lands; not knowing then the thing ordained, even that Troy must

fall the second time by means of the very weapons wherewith I overcame her treacherous king. But so it is; with yonder Bow you shall slay Paris, author of these long woes to Greeks and Trojans, and after that shall the end come. Moreover, at Troy you shall be healed of your grievous wounds, for I will send Asclepios, the divine Physician, Apollo's beloved son, to meet you there. Rich shall be your portion of the city's spoils, and safe your home-faring, and peaceful the remnant of your days. And now I bid you farewell once again, trusty comrade; obey, live happy, and remember Heracles!

"But to you, child of a glorious sire, I have this word from Zeus. Yours it is to conquer where Achilles fell, and to avenge his fall; for this were you born and came into the world, that you might be a chosen instrument in the hand of Zeus, to deal his justice on Priam's sinful house. Go your way, then, with Philoctetes, and with Odysseus; on both of whom I lay solemn charge to put aside their feud, though friends they may never be. And think no more, Neoptolemus, of pleasant Scyros and the home of your childhood; these you have left for ever; but in their stead the gods will give you the kingdom of your fathers, even the goodly land of Phthia, when you have won the victor's crown that the inscrutable Fates denied to peerless Achilles."

Now when he had thus spoken, Heracles vanished into air. And Philoctetes and Neoptolemus were not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but went down straightway to the ship, and having told Odysseus what had befallen, they made an easy peace with him.

So all three returned in seeming amity to the camp before Troy.

But a true friendship had sprung up between the castaway of Lemnos and his rescuer; so Neoptolemus would have Philoctetes to lodge in his own quarters, and appointed slaves to tend upon him. Since they left the isle, Philoctetes had felt no return of his torments, but the voyage had greatly wearied him, and on his first night in the camp he slept profoundly. As he slept, he dreamed a dream. He thought there stood by his bedside a tall, white-robed man of an earnest and sweet countenance, having in his left hand an amber cup, with a little green snake curled about the stem, and the snake held a blood-red stone in its mouth. With his other hand the stranger drew off the coverlet from Philoctetes, and deftly unrolled the swathings from his wound; and instantly the snake darted forth and coiled itself round his foot. At that the dreamer shrieked, and would have struggled, but his limbs refused to move. "Be still, and fear not," said the stranger; "this companion of mine will do you no hurt, but good. By the wisdom of his kind, he found the stone he carries, which has the virtue of drawing to itself all deadly poison whatsoever. With one touch of it, he will purge your envenomed wound, and through the potency of this celestial balm your flesh shall come again, like the flesh of a little child." As he spoke, Philoctetes felt the gentle pressure of something smooth and cold upon his foot; his visitant dropped crystal-shining liquor thereon out of the amber cup—and immediately deep sleep took hold on him, and he

knew no more. But when he awoke in the morning he knew it was Asclepios who had appeared to him, for behold, his foot was made whole and sound with never a scar, so that he leaped and walked, praising the gods.

That day the Greeks made ready for battle once more, deeming victory secure, now they had not only Neoptolemus with them, but the Bow of Heracles. But Odysseus said, "We lack one thing yet; until that be ours, it is lost labour to assail the city. What, have you forgotten the oracle I learned from the mouth of Helenus, concerning the Palladium?"

Then answered bold Diomed, "It comes in my mind, son of Laertes, that the Trojan forged that oracle, with intent to discourage us. For to find the Palladium we must first take Troy, where it is hidden. Up, then, and come with me; if we fight not till the image is ours, we may sit here till our swords are rust."

"A word in your ear, comrade," said Odysseus, smiling, and drew him aside from the rest. And when they had spoken together a little while, Diomed declared, to the wonder of all, that Sthenelus, his kinsman, should lead his men to battle, but he himself would keep the camp with Odysseus. So the rest of the chiefs set forth with the host, and many a gibe they cast at those two, who out of mere faint-heartedness were forfeiting their share of glory and of spoil that day.

But when evening came, the laugh was with Odysseus and Diomed. For the host returned crestfallen, because the battle had gone sore against them; and

what should they see, set on the altar in the midst of the camp, but the Palladium itself! Open-mouthed with astonishment, the Greeks crowded to gaze upon that ancient barbaric semblance of her whom they worshipped in common with their foes. Rudely carved in what seemed to be ebony, and about a cubit in height, the idol was draped from neck to foot in a narrow robe of golden tissue, thickly sown with pearls and precious stones; its eyes, each a single emerald, glittered formidably in the sunlight; the hands, held stiffly downwards against the sides, grasped a lance and targe of gold. Such was the Luck of the Trojans—their *Little Pallas*, fashioned by artificers in the ancient ages out of a shapeless block that, as tradition told, had fallen from the skies.

Now Odysseus and Diomed were standing as though on guard beside the miraculous image, each with drawn sword in hand; and the swords were red with blood. And a youth lay bound at the altar-foot, apparelled like a king's son. The two chieftains were at once surrounded by eager questioners, but their replies were drowned in a babel of joyful and wondering cries, until Agamemnon commanded the multitude to draw back and keep silence while Odysseus should tell what had befallen. So Odysseus stood forth before them all, and recounted the matter briefly and sedately, after his wont.

He told how he came to guess that the Palladium was no longer hidden in Troy, but on Mount Ida; and how, from the night he let Helenus go free, he found means to have his comings and goings continually spied upon, until the youth was tracked to a

certain densely-wooded hollow of the mountain. Who did this work of espial, he forbore to tell, but from hints he let fall his hearers easily gathered that he had once more purchased confederates within the city. Neither did Odysseus think fit to say why he kept the knowledge thus gained from all his comrades but Diomed; the truth being that he desired to share the honours of his exploit with as few others as might be, since he could not achieve it single-handed. "Finding you so bent on fight, princes," he said, "I was loth to thwart you, and imparted my design only to the man who had braved so many perils at my side. The rest is soon told. Having made our way to the place already pointed out to me, Diomed and myself surprised and slew the men we found keeping guard there; but we took Helenus alive, and have brought him here a captive, as you see, because he knows much that may profit us to learn. Now, sons of the Greeks, victory is assured you at last; there stands the Palladium; the Luck of the Trojans is gone from them, and therewithal the gods have delivered them into your hands."

. . . . . .

In the same hour, a small band of Trojans went toiling up the steep forest ways of Ida, bearing among them an open litter. The evening light fell soft and golden athwart the leafy canopy of their path, and danced on their bronze helms, on the burnished metal-work of the litter, on the jewelled collar and armlets of a young man lying motionless therein. His eyes were closed, his curled lovelocks shaded a countenance deathly in its pallor; his flower-broidered vesture was torn apart at the bosom, showing a crimson puncture

in the ivory flesh, whence dark drops trickled slowly. You would have said the hardest heart must be melted to ruth by a sight so fair and piteous; for though he lay like one asleep his mouth was rigid with pain, and Death's seal was set visibly on that beautiful brow. But his companions eyed him coldly as now and again they halted for a shift of bearers; and at last one of them muttered to another, "He is dying fast. We might have spared this labour, for he will be gone ere we can bring him whither he bade us." To whom his comrade made answer, "And a good riddance, say I; but better for Troy had it come sooner. Ay, would to the gods he had died a babe on these hillsides—then might our noble Hector be living yet, and hundreds of brave men more that have fallen in defence of him and his light-o'-love. But set on, friends; kings' sons must be obeyed while there is breath in them, and 'tis the whim of Paris to die where he was reared."

Then silently they bore the litter onward until they came to the clearing in the forest where stood the thatched cot of Paris' foster-parents. Now the old herdsman was dead, but his wife dwelt there still. She came out to meet them, and signed to them to set down the litter, and as she looked thereon, she wept. "Alas!" she cried, "now is the dream come true I dreamed long years ago. Full well I knew what it foreboded, and many a time I said to my good man, now at rest, 'We shall see our beautiful fosterling no more till he comes to us with the deathwound in his breast.' Sirs, 'tis an arrow-wound, is it not? Know you whose hand sped the shaft?"

"Ay, good mother," answered one of the men, "I can tell you that. When the Greeks gave us battle to-day the lord Paris went not forth, but watched the mellay from the wall; for Queen Helen, as we heard, had prevailed with him to forbear the fight. Now there was with the Greeks a Bowman whom none of us had seen before; he carried the hugest bow I ever beheld, but he fought neither with small nor great, and seemed to be looking for some one amid our ranks. At last I saw a warrior beside him point upwards to where our prince was standing; straightway the Bowman took aim . . . a black-feathered arrow sang through the air . . . a shriek from Paris told what mark it had found. And when—praise the gods—we had beaten off the enemy for the hundredth time, I, with these others, was bidden carry him hither. For the leeches, it seems, pronounced his wound mortal, and thereupon he cried out incessantly that he must go back to Ida. A strange fancy—but dying men are given to such——"

"Who says I am dying?" came a faint voice from the litter, "I shall *not* die, I tell you, if only . . . ah, this dizzy trance! . . . Give me some wine that I may speak. . . ."

It was the old woman who gently raised the head of Paris and held the cup to his lips; when he had drunk he revived a little, and knew her, and said, "Mother, will you help your boy now, though he has forsaken you these many years?"

"Surely," said she, weeping, "but I fear you are past help, my son."

"No, no," murmured Paris, "only you must hasten.

Lead my bearers to the poplar grove, where the brook comes down from the upper glens; then take this ring from my little finger and throw it into the water. And then leave me, all of you, for a helper will come . . . whom I must meet alone."

"This is the end, dame," whispered one of the Trojans, "his wits begin to wander."

"I am none so sure," answered the foster-mother in his ear, "I remember that silver ring—he would never tell me whence he had it—who knows but there is some magic in it? At least, let him have his will."

So they did even as Paris had bidden them, and he was left alone on the margin of the brook.

Now this brook was the same brook that flowed through Œnone's secret vale. She it was who had given the silver ring to Paris, in that far-off summer-tide of their happy love; and she had told him, if ever he had need of her, to cast the token into the stream, and she would come to him without fail. And still he had worn her token, not knowing why, for little he thought ever to put it to use. But when he knew himself wounded to the death, a sudden memory came to him; had not the Wood Nymph once said that she and her sisters were gifted to heal all manner of hurts and diseases by their touch? Nay, he remembered proof of it—he had seen Œnone's flower-soft hands restore a dove to life, that had dropped at her feet with the hunter's arrow in its breast. Œnone would save him, could he but summon her in time!

The sun had set now; a green light lingered in the West; but the shadows were deepening momently

about Paris where he lay like some fair, ruined statue amid the dark columns of the trees. It was pleasant there, he thought, drowsily; a little breeze had woke at nightfall and was sighing through the poplars—the brook sang him a low, lulling tune . . . how sweet was this woodland peace after the heat and turmoil of Troy! And now he felt no more pain, only a deep, delicious languor . . . he would sleep until Œnone came. . . . For that she would come, and coming forgive and heal him, it was not in Paris to doubt for an instant; what heart of woman had ever resisted when he chose to plead?

Meantime, Œnone stood already near at hand in the twilit grove, and watched him awhile with a mind divided between love and bitterness. But as he sank into the slumber she knew must end in death, she glided forward with a soft cry of pity, bent over him, and lightly kissed his brow. "Wake," she said, "wake and speak to me, dear heart."

Paris unclosed his failing eyes, and with a smile of infinite tenderness—"I was dreaming of you," he murmured, "my soul's joy—my Helen." And with that name upon his lips, he died.

For at the sound of it the Nymph leaped back as though stung by a serpent. "Let Helen save you, then," she cried, "for Œnone will not! Why should I give you life to waste in a harlot's arms?" So saying, the daughter of Ida fled weeping through the darkened forest.

CHAPTER V

The Taking of Troy Town

THE sun had just arisen in a cloudless sky, and already the blue spires of wood-smoke were curling aloft from a thousand hearths and the cheerful stir of life began to fill the wide ways of Troy ; for even in a beleaguered city the daily round goes on. And indeed, long habit had made the state of war so familiar to the Trojans that they had come to look on it as a thing of course to be pent within their bulwarks, to live amid excursions and alarms, nay, to see the funeral trains of the fallen pass day by day along their streets. Thus

it was, even with men and women ripe in years; the younger, who had been but children when the siege began, had almost forgotten the days of peace; as for the little ones, born and bred among the sights and sounds of warfare, tales of dragons and chimaeras were not more marvellous to their ears than the old folks' talk of a time when there were no Greeks and no fighting in the land.

So when in that bright morning hour, ushering in, it seemed, another day of a struggle that would never end, a sudden rumour flew from lip to lip—"*the Greeks are gone*," the hearers' minds were divided between unbelief and blank amazement. It was like being told that the sea was gone from its immemorial bounds! Sober citizens shook their heads—the thing could not be—it was some delusion—or a false report set about by spies of the Greeks. But still the rumour spread, and soon the most incredulous were shaken; for the trumpets summoned the burghers to assembly in the market-place, and there Priam let proclaim by voice of heralds that the tidings brought in by a scout at dawn were confirmed. Prince Deïphobus with his bodyguard had reconnoitred the shore, and found it vacant of ships, and the Greek camp deserted. The cause none might guess, but the whole fleet of the enemy had assuredly departed, under cover of night.

Now even then the Trojans could not realise that deliverance was come to them at last, but stood awhile like folk dazed, until one very aged man lifted up his voice in fervent thanksgiving to the gods, not without tears; whereat the multitude, strangely moved, broke suddenly into wild laughter mingled with weep-

ing. Grave, reverend elders and battle-hardened warriors embraced one another, sobbing like children and crying out: "Troy is saved! The sword hung over us is taken away! Praise, all praise to Zeus, and holy Apollo, and Athena our Lady of Succour!" Then forthwith each man there must needs carry the great news to his home; and joy, as it were a rising tide, overflowed the hearts of young and old, high and low, throughout the city.

Next, all the men-folk were eager to view for themselves the abandoned camp of the foe, and a great company set out thither, headed by the ancient King himself in his mule-drawn car. And being come to the trench and wall that defended the long encampment, and passing through the open gate, they ranged hither and thither among the empty huts, calling one to another to mark now this, now that. Here Hector had made his great assault and all but destroyed the ships with firebrands; these were Achilles' quarters, these Agamemnon's; here had been a wrestling-ring, and yonder the place of council or assembly, set round with seats of marble. But presently loud cries from a group that had gone down the seaward side of the ridge whereon the huts were builded, called the rest to behold a mysterious and prodigious object. Close upon high-water mark, there stood upon the sand the gigantic wooden image of a Horse, mounted on wheels of immense size. The legs were four massive posts, and the barrel-shaped body was framed of overlapping planks, like a ship's hull; but the great head and arched neck were carved to the life, and the eyes, of some lustrous paste, seemed to fix the beholders

with a glassy and malevolent stare. Painted vermilion, streaked and dappled with black, the ungainly monster towered against the background of blue sea, a sight to perplex the wisest heads.

For a while the Trojans lost themselves in conjectures. That this Horse was newly made was plain from his scarce dried coat, and the fresh-sawn timbers littered about him. But why had the Greeks undertaken a work of such labour and skill on the eve of departure? They must have meant to leave it here as some sort of memorial—or was it rather an offering to some god? A man of rank and influence, Thymœtes by name, caught up the suggestion, and weightily pronounced that the Horse was a propitiatory offering to the guardian deities of Troy, and as such ought to be forthwith transported to the city. "Clearly," said he, "our enemies furnished it with wheels for no other purpose. Why their gift should take this singular form, I pretend not to explain; but what more natural than that they should seek to avert the wrath of our gods, whose land they have afflicted so long?"

But against this, certain sage elders of the people declared that an enemy's gift is ever baneful; far from accepting the Horse, the safest way was to destroy it at once, either by axe or by fire. This opinion found favour with the more cautious-minded, but that of Thymœtes prevailed with the unreflecting many, and loud debate arose. Just then a little procession was seen descending the ridge, led by a stately, black-bearded man in priestly array. Two lads swinging golden censers walked one on either

side of him, and a band of temple slaves followed—some bearing faggots and lighted torches, others leading along a garlanded bull. Reverently the crowd made way, for this was Laocoon, priest of Poseidon, and they saw he was come to offer sacrifice to that mighty Ruler of the Deep upon the sea-shore, as the manner was. And suddenly some one cried out that the Greeks' strange gift must be meant for Poseidon, Lord and Tamer of the Steed, the patron of Troy from the beginning, and fellow-builder with Apollo of her sacred wall. Which reading of the riddle so pleased all the folk that they were for dragging the Horse to the city then and there. But Laocoon, striding forward, loudly bade them forbear. "O fools and blind!" he exclaimed, "do you know the Greeks so little after all these years that you cannot scent treachery in this device of theirs? Is this how you profit by the bitter lessons you have had from the master-plotter, Odysseus? Or do you think, because the enemy have withdrawn for a season, they have gone for good? Not so; therefore am I come to implore Poseidon mercifully to avert their return. As for this Wooden Horse, believe me, it is some engine of destruction; perhaps they have concealed armed men in its huge belly—perhaps—for what is it but a movable tower?—they mean to wheel it alongside our wall and spring to the rampart from its back. Beware of such gifts, sons of the Trojans, and deal with them as I do!"

So saying, he hurled the javelin he carried at the Wooden Horse. Mightily he threw, and the broad, keen point struck its flank with a hollow thud, and

remained fixed, the shaft quivering in air. Was it fancy, or did the bystanders at the same instant really hear a faint clang as of arms reverberate from within the Horse? Swayed by the words and example of the priest, many were in act to rush forward and break it open with their swords or iron-shod staves, when the sight of other new-comers arrested them.

These were a troop of shepherds, who dragged among them a young man of dishevelled and terrified appearance, with arms bound behind his back. They ran full speed to the spot where Priam was standing, and flung their captive at his feet, crying, "A prisoner, Lord King! A Greek spy! We bring him to you for sentence."

"Death to him! Death to the Greek!" thundered the Trojans with one voice; but Priam, stretching forth his sceptre, commanded silence, and bade the shepherds tell where they had found the man. And they answered that, having heard the good tidings, they had come down from Ida to view the camp; and as they crossed the plain this Greek came out of an osier-bed by the river, as if to meet them, nor sought to fly, but willingly yielded himself prisoner. Being taxed with spying, he denied it; but to all questions he would only answer that he would tell his name and business to their rulers. Then Priam commanded to lift the man upon his feet, and mildly bade him give account of himself. The trembling prisoner looked with a shudder at the fierce, threatening faces around him, and bursting into tears, "Hapless that I am," he exclaimed, "there is no soul to pity or befriend me in the wide world! I have 'scaped death

at the hands of mine own comrades only to perish at the hands of these their enemies."

These words awakened curiosity in the Trojans, and all listened attentively while, at a sign from Priam, the prisoner continued: "O King, that I am a Greek it were vain to deny, and as such I expect no mercy from you or yours. But since it is your will to know my name and what brings me here, I will speak the whole truth of the matter. I am Sinon of Argos, sprung of an ancient and once powerful house, now brought low by the wicked arts of a remorseless enemy—Odysseus of Ithaca. That accursed miscreant destroyed Palamedes, the head of my kindred, by lying accusations, having a deadly grudge against him; and too well I know now that he plotted to destroy me also, because he heard of my vowing to avenge my murdered kinsman. For when our chiefs resolved to give up the siege, Calchas the Seer announced that he had received this oracle from Apollo—*Hither ye came safely by the shedding of a virgin's blood; hence shall ye not depart safely without shedding the blood of him I have chosen among you.* Then in sore dismay we inquired of the Seer who was that predestined victim, but he shrank from uttering the name, and for ten days he kept his hut, refusing speech with any man. Meanwhile all the host were in a fever to be gone, and at last Odysseus—who but he?—prevailed on Calchas to speak out. Now as the gods live, I believe he bribed the covetous Seer with gold to forge that oracle, or at least to name a victim instead of choosing one by lot. For *mine* was the name that Calchas pronounced at last, in hearing of all;

and Odysseus, standing beside me, whispered in my ear—'Those that threaten me, Sinon, seldom live long.' But I, overpowered with horror, found no voice to plead—no strength to resist my doom—and of all I called friends not one interposed to save me. In place of pity I saw only selfish joy in every face, each man exulting in his own escape—nay, eager to seal his safety with my blood! Why should I dwell on the dreadful scene that followed? Enough to tell, that at the last moment, at the very altar, I shook off the numbing trance of despair—sudden strength like a madman's came to me—I burst my bonds and fled as on wings! How I outstripped my pursuers I know not, but I gained the river bank and, doubling through the osier coverts, threw them off my track. The search went on till nightfall, while I lay quaking in a bed of reeds—then I heard a trumpet sounding the recall to camp. Now, Trojan lords, you have heard all, and I am ready to die. Strike quickly, if you would do Odysseus a service!"

But the kindly old King made answer, "We have no thought of harming you, unfortunate young man; rather will we give you a new home and new friends in the stead of those you have lost by no fault of your own. Unbind him, some of you! And now tell us, Sinon, since that is your name, what moved the Greeks thus suddenly to depart—and what means this strange Horse they have builded?"

Released from his bonds, Sinon raised his hands to heaven and solemnly said, "Be witness, divine Light of Day; be witness, the altar of sacrifice and the sacred fillets placed on my devoted head, that

lawfully I renounce the ties of country, lawfully forswear allegiance to the Greeks and reveal their secrets! And you, gracious King, when you shall find Troy owes salvation and triumph to the knowledge I now impart, be mindful of your promise to spare and befriend me!"

He paused, looking round the expectant circle with a furtive smile on his pale face, then addressed himself again to Priam: "You must know, royal lord, that the Greeks have ever placed all their hopes of victory in the favouring might of Pallas Athena. But since that theft of the Palladium, whereby they thought to deprive you utterly of her protection, the goddess has manifested by clear and awful signs her deadly wrath against them. To name but one, the sacred image was no sooner set up in our camp than a dazzling flame burst from its helmed head, and to the terror of all it brandished three times the lance in its hand! And Athena herself revealed to Calchas in a vision that the Greeks were become utterly hateful to her, because Diomed and Odysseus had polluted that most holy image by the touch of their bloodstained hands, after they had slain its keepers on Ida. Nothing could wipe out that stain of innocent blood; but a heavy penalty must be paid if the Greeks would escape sheer destruction at the hands of the outraged goddess. For not only must they quit the Trojan land, but they must make and leave behind them another wooden image, in lieu of that which they had desecrated; and it should be a new and more exceeding potent talisman, bringing glory as well as safety to Troy. Yea, if the Trojans once lodged it within their citadel,

they might cross the seas in their turn, and subdue all Greece by the power of that wondrous war-charm! All this the vision spake to Calchas; and the Greeks, not daring to disobey, caused Epeus, a noted craftsman, to build this Horse forthwith."

Again Sinon paused, and several voices cried, "But why a Horse? Why of so huge a size?"

"Ah, friends," he answered, "you have yet to learn the cunning of the Greeks. Athena gave no command concerning the form or size of the image; therefore they bethought them of making it such that the Trojans should neither guess its purpose nor be able to take it through the city gates. Who indeed *could* guess that the image of a four-footed beast was to take the place of Athena's own likeness as the Luck of Troy?"

Then said Laocoon, sternly eyeing the Greek, "Yet the Horse might be taken for the symbol of Poseidon, the builder and lover of our city?"

"True," answered Sinon readily, "but all the less reason to connect it with Athena, for those two Immortals, men say, are rivals in many cities. Is it not told how they disputed for possession of bright Athens, and when they had referred their claims to a jury of the burghers, Athena made hers good by creating the Olive Tree, while Poseidon caused a Horse to spring from the ground?"

"You have the glib tongue of all your race, stranger," returned the priest scornfully; "if you have not also your share of their cunning, I am the more deceived. Now hear me, princes and men of Troy. Be not so lost to all prudence as to trust the bare word of this unknown Greek. For my part, I find gross un-

likelihood in every part of his tale. How could one man break through a multitude and escape, as he pretends? Or who ever heard of divine vengeance falling on a whole people for the sin of two offenders, and they themselves left unscathed? Or think you any would dare to cheat the goddess of her will by such a device as this man alleges? No! The whole story smells of falsehood and of treason, nor will I, for one, believe a word of it unless Athena herself send a sign that it is true. Heed my warning, Trojans, if you be men, not credulous children; meanwhile, I must about my sacred duties."

With that, Laocoon advanced slowly and majestically to the margin of the waves, and stood there between the two incense-bearers, who were his own sons, chanting an invocation to Poseidon, while the attendants made ready for the sacrifice. Then in full view of the throng who reverently watched him, the sign whereof he had spoken was given in fearful wise. For a pair of huge sea-snakes suddenly came gliding over the calm surface of the deep, their crested emerald heads reared aloft, their burnished coils rising and falling as they swam. Straight to the shore they came with the speed of arrows, and in an instant each had enfolded one of Laocoon's sons in its deadly grip. The slaves fled screaming, but the agonised father rushed, javelin in hand, upon the nearest monster—in vain, for ere he could strike, a blow of its tail dashed the weapon from his grasp, and he too was seized in its coils. Even then, he freed one arm and clutched the other serpent by the neck; but now both the great beasts twined themselves about him, so that the terror-

stricken onlookers beheld father and sons writhing in one dreadful web. There was a moment of struggle, of furious hisses and throttling cries; then three crushed, lifeless bodies sank upon the beach and the serpents darted onward, side by side. And all ran for their lives, scattering right and left in blind, headlong flight; but the serpents neither halted nor turned aside; through the camp they went, rolling their vast, sinuous coils along, and swiftly disappeared across the plain. Few save women and aged men were abroad in Troy that day; but these told shudderingly how they saw the two dire creatures glide through the unguarded gates, and up to Athena's temple in the citadel, within whose portals they vanished, to be seen no more of human eye.

This fearful end of Laocoon and his sons appeared to all that witnessed it a manifest judgment upon him for thwarting the will of Athena, and a clear proof that Sinon's tale was true. Therefore the Trojans' first act on recovering from their terror was to bury the three corpses in the sand where they lay, without rites and in silence, as the custom was when any perished by lightning or other heaven-sent doom. And next, having despatched messengers for wain-ropes, they hasted to drag the Wooden Horse to Troy. At the gate, they were brought to a standstill, for that towering bulk of timber rose far higher than the lintel, and its head was almost level with the cornice of the wall above. Then out spoke the sage Prince Antenor, near kinsman to Priam, "Truly said Sinon, that the Greeks had made the Horse so great and tall of set purpose. But they shall not

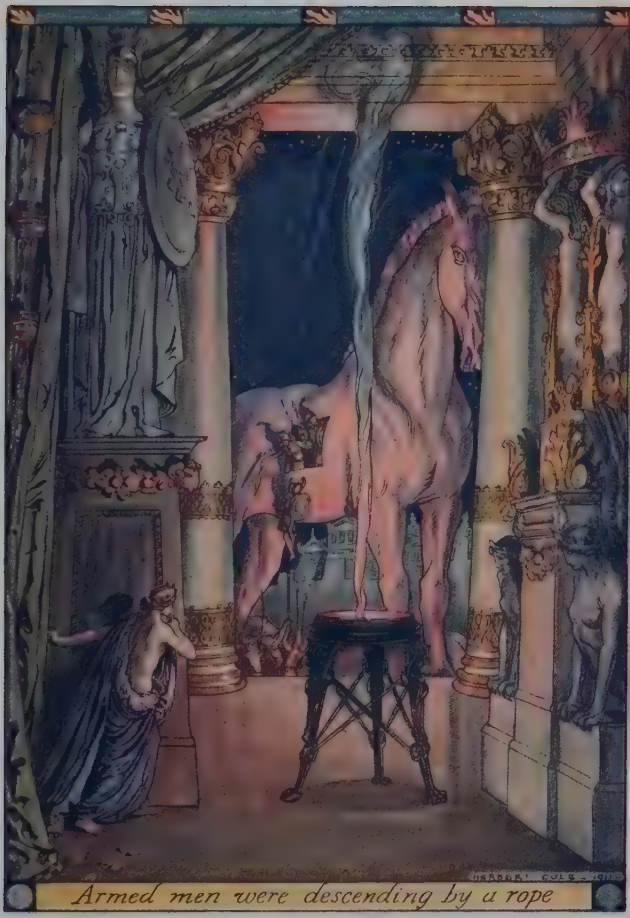
balk us; come, let us make a breach in the wall to give it entrance!" And forthwith the men of Troy set to work with axes and crowbars; and as the Fates decreed, they breached the wall at the very spot where Achilles had torn down the battlement in the hour of his doom. Moreover, though the Trojans then remembered it not, it was just here that Heracles, with Telamon his comrade, broke through on the day when he took the city and slew the treacherous King Laomedon.

Now all these things were ordained from the beginning. For when Poseidon and Apollo were yet building that wall for Laomedon, he betrayed his intent to defraud them of their promised hire; wherefore they secretly brought another builder to finish it, even Aeacus, the father of Peleus; because they knew that their own handiwork was impregnable, but what a mortal builded, other mortals could destroy. And when Aeacus had filled with masonry the gap they had left, behold, three serpents appeared, and each in turn strove to mount the wall at the place where he had laboured. Two fell back, writhing in throes of death, but the third passed over with a weird and warlike cry. Then did Apollo interpret that portent to Aeacus, saying that the three serpents signified three warriors descended from himself, who should assault Troy in the after time. Their names the god revealed not; but his prophecy was handed down in the family of Aeacus; and by this time it was evident that the first two serpents prefigured Patroclus and Achilles, who were both of his posterity. As for the third and conquering serpent, the hour was

even now at hand that should reveal the Victor he foreshadowed.

But nought of this knew the Trojans; with triumph and rejoicing they dragged the Wooden Horse through the breach and up to the citadel, and left it standing before the doors of Athena's temple. The rest of that day was passed in high festivity; every altar reeked with sacrifice, every household had its jocund banquet; for many hours after nightfall the torch-lit streets rang with the sounds of universal revelry. But at last, overcome with wine or weariness, the merry-makers slept, and night and silence reigned throughout the city.

It was now that darkest hour that comes before the dawn, when stars, soon to pale, burn their brightest; when the thrice-prayed-for boon of sleep falls as dew on tired eyes of the sick and the sorrowing. The night sky, cloudless, windless, showed like a canopy of purple against its glittering tracery of constellations. Other light there was none in earth or heaven, save the dying glow of the altar-fire in Athena's shrine. That sacred fire had burned perpetually ever since Troy was founded, tended by a long succession of high-born priestesses; in that ancient temple, enclosing the Hearth of the City, warders had ever kept nightly vigil behind doors strongly barred. But this night the doors stood wide; the fire within was sinking unreplenished; priestess and warders had forsaken their post. And yet the shrine was not wholly deserted; on the marble steps of the altar lay a black-robed figure, prone, motionless, with long, dark hair streaming across one outflung arm. It was Cassandra. At the joyous feast in Priam's



Armed men were descending by a rope

hall she had appeared on a sudden in that garb of mourning, with her pale, desperate face and burning eyes; had shrieked to the startled revellers they knew not what wild presages of imminent doom—and passed like a spectre from their sight. There had been a moment's pause—some interchange of uneasy glances—then the carouse went on merrily as before; after all, every one knew what to think of the brainsick princess and her prophecies! Had she not been foretelling Troy's destruction these ten years and more? So Cassandra's latest warning fell on heedless ears; she had known it must be so, yet the god-given power within her forced the unavailing words from her lips; shuddering she looked upon that festal scene, upon the laughing, wine-flushed faces of her kindred, and crept away to the empty citadel—to wait the end she foreknew.

And now that end came swiftly. From where she lay, numb with despair, at the altar foot, Cassandra heard a faint ring and rattle as of armour, whispering voices, and stealthy footsteps on the platform before the temple. Trembling, she half rose, and slipped behind the altar, and crouched down in the space between it and the great image of Athena. The fire next moment leaped up into sudden blaze and sent a crimson glare far across the threshold. She lifted unwilling, fascinated eyes and looked forth, knowing well what she must see. The Wooden Horse towered blood-red in the light—but with a black, gaping hollow in its side, out of which armed men were descending by a rope, held steady by comrades below. As the last alighted, the flames died down and gloom

shrouded the band; but not before Cassandra saw that they were ten all told—saw, too, certain well-known faces among them. Odysseus was there, and Diomed, and Menelaus; there was also a youth, taller than them all, with curls of ruddy gold clustered about his neck, who, by his face, could be none other than Achilles' son. She cowered yet lower in the darkness as swift feet crossed the threshold and advanced to the altar—had she been seen? No; someone stirred the dying embers—lit a torch thereat—turned and went out—her hour was not yet come! She saw the flaming torch brandished aloft, once, twice, and thrice from the temple steps; "The signal to the rest," she muttered—"O gods, that I might raise one piercing cry before these men stifled my voice in blood! Vain, vain, for who would hear? 'Tis no woman's feeble tones that must rouse the Trojans from their drunken sleep!" And she flung herself down again, pressing her face to the marble floor. The last red embers faded out upon the altar—the light that was the symbol of a city's life was quenched for ever.

But meanwhile another light was rising, broad and baleful—the light of a beacon-fire on the headland where the Greeks had made Achilles' tomb; and he that kindled it was Sinon. For, as Laocoon had divined, Sinon's story was a cunning falsehood, and himself no fugitive but the accomplice in a deep-laid plot, whereof Odysseus was deviser in chief. In pursuance of this stratagem, the Greek fleet had withdrawn to the near isle of Tenedos, with all the chiefs save ten chosen by lot for the perilous venture of getting into Troy concealed in the Wooden Horse.

These, if they escaped discovery which meant certain death, were to signal by torch to Sinon—who was to slip away at dusk to Achilles' tomb—that all was quiet in the city; he, again, must signal by beacon-fire for the fleet to return. And by the ordering of the gods all had come to pass even as the Greeks hoped. For a moment, indeed, all had hung by a hair; but the dread ministers of Athena that slew Laocoon silenced the one voice that might have saved Troy.

Swiftly now the Greeks recrossed the strait between coast and isle, like eager wolves they raced across the plain and surrounded the doomed city. The breached wall offered them ready access at one point; but by direction of Odysseus they were to enter in three divisions; one through the breach; the others through the seaward and landward gates, which their comrades within would open; that the Trojans might be attacked on all sides. Stealing down from the citadel, the ten comrades found the warders of the gates sleeping soundly on their posts; they stabbed them where they lay, and set the gates wide. . . . For a little while, that yet seemed long like years, the slayers stood waiting, listening with beating hearts in the darkness and stillness. . . . Dawn must be near, they knew . . . already the sky was paling . . . . would the host never come? Then, suddenly, the rushing sound of an oncoming multitude; the shrill note of a trumpet; a shadowy, surging mass pouring in, rank on rank, through breach and gates—and the Greeks were in Troy at last!

No need more for stealth and silence; with hoarse and savage outcry they swept on, with clash and clatter

of arms; and all at once torches flared out by the thousand, for they had brought store of brands and tinder for their work of destruction. Shouts of "Fire the houses! Give us light to kill by! Burn, burn, and slay!" rang from street to street, mingled with whoops and yells and thundering din of blows rained on gates and doors with axes and spear-butts. It was as though the gods, who had given the Trojans over to the madness of joy in their brief hour of fancied triumph, had possessed the Greeks in turn with frenzy of darker, deadlier sort, sending lust of blood and slaughter on every soul among them. For the Trojans, roused from their last earthly sleep by such clamour as might have wakened the very dead, and rushing all bewildered to doors and casements, were assailed ere they well knew it by swarms of foes, who in their fury seemed rather wild beasts than men. Every house whose stately aspect betokened rich plunder within was the mark of showers of firebrands, stones, and darts; and at a hundred points the same desperate assault and defence were waged; outer gates were battered down, forecourts carried with a rush—then would come the storming of the main doorway, or, failing that, the Greeks would clamber up by pillar and cornice and break in at an upper story. Meanwhile sparks began to fly and smoke to billow forth from many a timber-ceiled portico and gilded wooden gable; and when the grey dawn broke, houses were already on fire in every street of the city.

Now the Trojans, almost to a man, fought with the courage of despair; as well they might, hearing every-

where the shouted words of command, "No quarter! No prisoners! Death to every male in Troy!" But, trapped unawares, the more part before they could fully arm themselves, and above all, far outnumbered by the enemy, their resistance was hopeless from the first. Soon the unequal fight became a massacre—the rising sun looked upon a city in flames, whose broad thoroughfares ran with the blood of her burghers and echoed to the screams of maddened women.

The fiercest conflict of any raged at the gateway of the palace. Here fought the Myrmidons and their young chieftain against Priam's sons and his household guards, picked warriors all. Here the brave Deïphobus and his brothers fell man by man before the sword of Neoptolemus. Resplendent in his father's armour, and transfigured, like him, by wrath as of a god, the youth's aspect struck fear into every Trojan breast. For thus had Achilles looked in the hour of his vengeance upon Hector; in such guise had Troy beheld him plant foot upon her battlements, at the supreme moment of his fate; to her people in their death-struggle it seemed the crowning horror that his spirit had burst the tomb and was come once more against them, mighty to destroy. Nevertheless, the five sons that were left to Priam held the gateway right manfully against Neoptolemus, though misdoubting that they strove not with flesh and blood; and all save one died as best becomes a warrior, fighting to the last gasp in defence of home and kindred. But when four of those princes and all their guards had fallen on the bloodstained threshold, the youngest brother, Polites by name, endured not

to abide alone the onset of the slayers, but flung down sword and buckler and with a desperate bound gained the sill of a small window in the wall of the gateway. The window, which served as a spyhole for the porter of the gate, was unbarred, being too narrow to admit a full-grown man; but Polites, who was a mere boy and of slender build, made shift to slip through. Short was his respite; for next moment the Myrmidons rushed through the gate that had been closed but not bolted behind the defenders; and while the rest sped onward, intent on plunder, Neoptolemus saw and gave chase to Polites. Through halls and corridors fled the boy, shrieking with terror —but presently with agony, as the pursuer's javelin struck him between the shoulders. Gathering all his force, he ran a few paces yet, into a pillared court open to the sky, and dropped dead in front of the altar in the midst. Neoptolemus, following close upon his heels, had just marked that a company of women were huddled together beside the altar, under the boughs of a great and ancient laurel, when Priam himself rose from an ivory chair close by, and tottered towards him, feebly brandishing a spear. The old king's sunken eyes gleamed with rage, and, reckless of imminent death, he exclaimed in quavering tones, "For this vile deed, Neoptolemus, may the gods requite thee, if any care they have for the things that belong unto their honour! See thy work, butcher—my youngest-born stretched in his blood before his father's eyes—and he but a child—the sacred household altar defiled with murder most foul! *Thou*, the son of Achilles—of him that was the mirror of all

nobleness, that gave back Hector to my tears? Nay, if thou so call thyself, thou liest—*bastard*." And with that word, he flung the spear from his trembling hand. But lightly Neoptolemus parried the puny throw with his shield, and answered, sternly smiling, "Tell thou that to Achilles, for to him thou shalt go straightway as my messenger. Bear him the news that Troy is taken, and forget not to tell him also—*this* deed of his unworthy son."

So saying, he dragged the ancient by his hoary locks to the altar, and with one sword-stroke shore off his head.

Thus died King Priam; than whom no prince in the world's annals suffered more grievous reverse of fortune, inasmuch as from such a height of pride and power he fell at last into the lowest depths of calamity, beholding his folk and city utterly destroyed, and his posterity rooted out from the land of the living. For he saw all the goodly company of his sons perish in the war, save only Helenus, and him he believed to have been likewise slain, when the Greeks took him captive. But if any think that Priam suffered unjustly, seeing his rule was ever clement and himself void of offence against gods and men, let them consider that he countenanced and abetted the sin of others, through indolence and pliancy of nature. For when he might have restored Helen and made the Greeks amends, he chose rather to set justice at nought than to oppose the will of his favourite son. And weakness, as it is of all vices the most dangerous in a king, so is it most heavily punished by the Powers above.

Nevertheless, though the posterity of Priam perished, it was fated that the sceptre should not depart from the royal race of Troy for ages yet to come, albeit they bore sway in a distant land. He had a kinsman on the father's side called Anchises, of the same age with himself, who in youth had been the fairest scion of a house renowned for its beauty—so fair, that immortal Aphrodite was enamoured of him, and she bore him a son. And this son, whose name was Aeneas, had grown up as good as he was beautiful, well-reputed as a warrior, and of a great discretion. Now Aeneas had shared in the royal feast that night, but, like the prudent man he was, had returned betimes from the revels to his father's mansion, that stood, bosomed in trees, within the vast enclosure of the palace gardens. Thus, when roused from slumber by the din of the assault, he had all his wits about him; sword in hand he stole forth by unfrequented byways, and, unseen himself, soon witnessed enough to assure him that there was no hope but in flight. The Greeks might not discover his secluded dwelling for some little time; meanwhile he would try to escape out of the city with his family and household. As he cautiously made his way back, Aeneas met one he knew—Panthus, priest of Apollo, hurrying along with a small bundle in his arms.

"All is lost, son of Anchises," said the priest in low, hollow tones; "our gods have departed from us —Troy is no more."

"I know it," answered Aeneas; "I am hasting to my home to flee with my dear ones, if the Fates permit. Come with me, Panthus, and cast in your lot with us.

If we can but win clear of the city, the woods of Ida will give us safe harbourage awhile."

"Nay, I will die where I have lived," replied Panthus, "for I am too old to begin the world again, and bitter, they say, is the bread of exile. But you, Aeneas, protected by your goddess-mother, may yet see happier days in a new home. And since we have met, I will give this treasure into your keeping, which I was about to bury deep in earth, to save it from the enemy's hands."

He undid a corner of his bundle, and showed a casket of beaten gold under the woollen wrapping. "Guard this as your life," he said, "and never suffer it to be opened, for it holds that which it is not lawful for any man to look upon, even those most sacred emblems of our city's gods which they themselves gave to her first king, Dardanus, the well-beloved of Zeus. And it is written in our ancient temple archives that these holy things shall one day become the secret talisman of an Eternal City, whose builder and maker shall be of Trojan lineage. May it be yours, worthy prince, to found that second Troy! But now farewell; Death calls me, nothing loth, to join the goodly fellowship of the men I loved, assembled in his halls this day. Hector, Deïphobus, Laocoon, reverend Priam, I come!"

So saying, Panthus thrust the sacred casket into Aeneas' hands, and went his way.

But Aeneas sped back to his home, and found his aged father, and his wife Creusa, and Ascanius his little son, and all the household, gathered together in fear and trembling, awaiting doom. Then with

all haste he loaded his retainers and slaves with jewels and gold and such other treasures as they could carry, and bade them make their way singly and separately to a certain ruined shrine of Demeter, half-way between the city and Mount Ida. For by now the fighting was ended, and the Greeks were scattering to the work of plunder; the gates were free, and in the confusion that everywhere reigned single fugitives might escape remark by dint of wary walking.

But there were three who could not go quite alone; Creusa was too timid, her boy too young, the old Anchises too infirm. And the last entreated to be left behind, saying he neither wished to outlive Troy, nor would consent to cumber and imperil the rest in their flight. Then Aeneas did the deed for which gods and men ever after held him in honour; with gentle force, he took his father on his shoulders, protesting by all most sacred that he would not stir from the place without him. "You know, Sir," he said, "that I have never yet disobeyed you; but if you will not this once obey *me*, we will stay and perish with you, both I, and my wife and child. For duty to a parent comes before all duties else."

So he prevailed with the old man, and having caused Creusa to wrap a fleecy sheepskin about him, he bade her follow at a little distance, keeping them in view. But he himself led the child Ascanius by one hand, and carried in the other the casket Panthus had given him. Thus burdened, he set forth, and lightly and swiftly walked he under Anchises' weight, for the gods added yet more strength to his stalwart frame. A devious course he took by lanes and alleys,

shunning the streets and open places, and was so fortunate as to meet no one. Moreover, having reached the trysting-place, he found the same good luck had attended his household; all were there, and answered to the roll-call of their names. But now one of Creusa's handmaids asked suddenly, "Where is our lady?" Aeneas looked about him in dismay—she was nowhere to be seen! Never doubting that she was close behind him—for had she been intercepted he must have heard her cry out—he had pressed forward under his load, not once looking behind. By this, dawn was breaking, and delay all the more perilous to the fugitives, but at all costs Aeneas determined to seek his wife on the road he had come, and, if need be, within the city, while the rest set forward to the mountain.

His quick eye noted that an old farm-cart stood among the disused ploughs and other rustic gear stored in the ruined shrine. Ordering the cart to be dragged out, and finding it fit for service, though much the worse for wear, he had Anchises and Ascanius placed in it, with the sheepskin and some cloaks spread under them, and also the bundles of treasure, not forgetting the precious casket, which he recommended to his father's special care. Pole, yoke, and hempen traces were quickly found, and the place of the draught-oxen supplied by a willing team of six sturdy slaves. Then, after hastily imploring his father's blessing and the protection of the gods, Aeneas gave the word to the whole train to make at their best speed for a certain glen of Ida, well known to Anchises, where he might rejoin them if all went

well. And thereupon he hastened citywards, spying right and left for Creusa as he went.

But the gods willed that his search should be vain. On all the way by which he had come there was no trace or token of her; and when he ventured even as far as his own house, in the forlorn hope that perhaps she had turned back in her fear and might be hiding there, behold, the stately dwelling of his ancestors was a sheet of fire! The spoilers had come and gone; if Creusa had indeed returned home, she must already have met either captivity, or death by those consuming flames. There was nothing for it but to retrace his steps once more; yet hoping against hope he went lingeringly now, scanning all the ground, and peering into every nook and corner that might have served her for a lurking-place. He was the more emboldened to persevere because that quarter of the city now seemed wholly deserted; silence as of death brooded over it, only broken by the roar and crackle of flames, or the heart-shaking crash of falling masonry.

The truth was, the victors, drunken not with wine but blood, and satiate with rapine, were for the most part sunk into a lethargy as deep as that wherein the vanquished had been surprised erewhile. But they had brought all their captives together into one place, and set trusty guards over them; Odysseus had seen to that. Nor had all the fatigues and frantic excitements of the night worn out his nerves of steel. Fresh-eyed, alert and calm as ever, he sat with drawn sword across his knees, on the steps of a temple hard by the palace, keeping watch and ward over a glitter-

ing mound of spoils at his feet. The hoarded wealth of a long line of kings was piled there—kings on whom vassal Asia had showered for generations her barbaric pearl and gold—for this was the royal treasure of Priam. The sheen of it caught Aeneas' eye from afar; he drew near, warily, and with a bursting heart viewed that sight pregnant with meaning. All the riches, the art, the luxury of the gorgeous East seemed gathered in that confused heap of ingots, gems, ivory, golden images, vessels, armour, jewelled diadems and sceptres, tables and couches of silver; and it all lay at the feet of the man with the sword—the man of the West! In his own poor land, the hundredth part of these splendours would be wealth beyond a dream; and yet they moved him not; he could sit there and regard them undazzled, without eagerness, even a little absently. From time to time he glanced round at the blackened ruins of temple and palace; only then did his falcon eyes brighten and a smile curl his thin lips. Ah, yes! It was the triumph, not the spoils, he cared for; it was power, not pomp, he loved, this man of the West, whose brain was as keen as his sword. That was why the sons of the East, loving magnificence and a life of pleasantness, could not stand against him at the last.

As Aeneas thought these things, it came strangely into his mind that so it must be to all time; this War of Troy was but the beginning of an eternal conflict, a feud not to be healed while the world endured; again and yet again, East and West must strive together for the mastery; and for ever, unbowed by defeat, unbroken by disaster, the West should send

forth her sons, conquering and to conquer. With that premonition strong upon him the Trojan turned away; for an instant, he had thought to spring upon the Greek, happy to die if, dying, he might choke the life out of his country's arch-enemy—but he recollected himself in time. His life was not his own to throw away while his father and his child needed a protector. And he made once more for the city gate.

But to reach it Aeneas must pass before the ancient fane of Hestia, Goddess of the Hearth. The doors stood ajar, and as he peered within, a tremor of hope ran through him, for he saw the figure of a woman clinging to the altar. Alas, a second glance showed him it was not Creusa. That golden hair, that imperial-moulded form half hidden, half revealed, by the gauzy robe zoned with flashing gems—he knew them too well! Here was she more ruinous to Troy than even Odysseus—an incarnate destruction—Helen herself, taking sanctuary from the vengeance of her injured lord. Rage overflowed Aeneas at the sight of her in her loveliness. "The witch shall die," he muttered, and drew his sword; "she shall not live to wheedle pardon from the doting fool Menelaus, to boast in Sparta's halls of our noblest slain for her wicked sake, and play the mistress to our captive wives and daughters! What though it be infamy to kill a woman? She is none—but a fiend sent from nethermost hell to be the bane of men. Ay, why else has Time no power to wither her accursed beauty? What woman of flesh and blood could keep youth's dewy bloom untouched by lapse of years—like her? O, I shall do well to rid the earth of this

In the midst thereof stood Queen Aphrodite with frowning brow

vampire that has drained our heart's-blood, ere she seek yet other prey ! "

With that he flung the doors apart, and would have entered, when suddenly a glory shone before him, as it were a pillar of sunbeams, and in the midst thereof stood Queen Aphrodite, with frowning brow. Never till now had the Goddess appeared to her son panoplied in the celestial splendour that the Immortals wear in their own abodes of bliss, and he shrank back, overcome with awe. Aphrodite's frown relaxed ; she took his hand, led him forth of the shrine, and mildly said, " Cease, my son, to harbour such thoughts of Helen ; for not she, nor her countrymen, but others, have wrought Troy's overthrow. Come, and I will show you who they are."

So saying, the radiant Goddess wound an arm about Aeneas, and, rising in air, wafted him in a moment to the summit of the watch-tower above the gate that looked towards Ida. Then, brushing his eyelids with flower-soft fingers, " Turn your eyes upon the citadel," she said, " for I have purged them for the nonce of mortal dulness, and tell me who stands there."

Aeneas looked, and behold, on the topmost battlement, athwart drifting smoke-clouds, a form loomed, menacing, gigantic in dazzling armour—the form of Pallas Athena. He shuddered, and withdrew his gaze. " Look now upon the gate called Scaean," commanded Aphrodite. Again Aeneas looked, and saw a rainbow over-arching the portal, and a resplendent car standing beneath it, with four steeds whiter than snow. Within the car stood bright-winged

Iris, holding the reins, and at her side was Heaven's glorious Queen. The warders of that gate, and many a Trojan more, overtaken in flight, lay in their blood before the threshold, so that the ground was red under the feet of the immortal coursers. And Hera was looking down upon the slain with the smile and mien of a conqueror in his hour of triumph.

"No more! Let me see no more, Mother Divine," implored Aeneas, covering his face; but Aphrodite answered, "Nay, child, there is yet a third whom it behoves you to see, that you may know against whom you and yours have contended so long. Look yonder, where the breach is that was made to give ingress to the Wooden Horse—ah, fain had I warned you, dear son, that Odysseus and nine Greeks more were lurking therein—fain revealed the fatal stratagem—but a Higher Power sealed my lips. Against Destiny not gods themselves may strive. But look as I bid you, and then will I speed you in safety to your mountain refuge."

Then Aeneas obeyed her, and in the breach of the wall he saw great Poseidon standing, trident in hand. And as he looked, the god tossed back the dusky locks from his brow, and began to smite the wall to right and left with his trident; and the wall crumbled and fell piecemeal, so that the air was filled with dust and the noise of stonework crashing down. And Poseidon laughed as he worked, and the sound of his laughter was like the hoarse sound of breakers dragging down the shingle of the beach.

"Now you have seen enough," said Aphrodite, touching the eyelids of her son once more; and im-

mediately his vision became as other men's, so that citadel, and breach, and Scaean gate appeared to him vacant of those divine presences. In the same instant, he found himself alone upon the tower, and it grieved his heart that Aphrodite had so suddenly departed from him, before he could crave tidings of his wife's fate.

But as he descended the staircase of the tower, Aeneas gave a cry of joy, for at the foot, in the gloom of the deep gateway, stood Creusa herself. Eagerly he advanced to embrace her; but she drew back with a strange airy motion, like one that floated rather than walked; death-pale she was, and a nameless dread rooted Aeneas to the spot as he marked how her form, that seemed grown taller, wavered like a shadow cast on moving water.

"Be not afraid, my dearest lord," she said in tones faint and low; "it is your own Creusa you see—but touch her not, for she is no longer of this world. Nay, nay, do not weep, sweet husband—all is well with me; behold, from the swoon of terror that overtook me as I followed you forth I have awakened to wondrous peace of soul, and am enlightened to perceive the good that shall come out of these evils, both to you and our son after you. And this much it is permitted me to reveal for your comfort. Not in cruelty but in kindness have the gods taken from you one too frail and timorous to share your future lot. For long must you wander over the sea's vast bosom, enduring toils and hardships manifold, until you come at last to the land called Hesperia and to the fruitful fields watered by yellow Tiber. There high fortune

awaits you; there shall you win a second bride, who will bring you a kingdom as her dower. But mourn not for the wife of your youth; rather rejoice that she is not to see, as others must, the spoil-decked homes of our conquerors, nor suffer in miserable thraldom the taunts of the proud Grecian dames. Nay, count me highly favoured, even in death; for the Great Mother of the Gods, to whom I have ever prayed, has made me of her train, to follow henceforth her lion-chariot on the solemn, star-crowned peaks of Ida, and share the ecstasy of her mystic rites. Farewell, and . . . love . . . our child."

Creusa's voice faltered over the last words; she waved her hand, smiling upon her lord with wistful eyes; then melted from his sight like a fading dream. Vainly he rushed forward, calling on her name in a burst of tears; the shadowy shape dislimned as he touched it, and his outstretched arms clasped but empty air. Bitterly weeping, he turned away for the last time from the gate of his native city; blindly now he strode onward, scarce knowing or caring whither, in the first keen anguish of loss. But Aphrodite guided his feet and lent them swiftness as of wings, so that in brief space he overtook Anchises and the rest upon their way.

Now Aeneas and all his company abode on the mountain until they learned by espial that the Greeks were gone from the ruined city. Then they descended to the coast; and being joined by the remnant of the folk of Troyland, who desired to cast in their lot with the pious son of Anchises, they builded them ships and sailed away in quest of a new home. And here

we take leave of Aeneas; for the story of his adventures by sea and land, and how he won the bride and the kingdom foretold him by Creusa, belongs not to the tale of Troy, but to the great Legend of the City founded by his seed. The true name of that city was bestowed on her by the gods, and handed down, as a secret whereon her fortune depended, from one to another of her primeval kings. But among the nations of the earth she has borne for ages the proudest name in all history—the name of ROME.

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Now the Greeks spent three days in dividing the spoils of Troy; so vast was the booty they carried off, reckless of peril to life and limb, from the burning houses. For the better avoiding of disputes, inquisition was made throughout the host, and every man, from Agamemnon down to the meanest camp-follower, was compelled to bring his plunder to the fore-court of Hera's temple, where lay the treasure of Priam. And by the general voice, Odysseus, Nestor, and Phoenix were chosen to assess the whole, and apportion to every man his share, according to his rank and deserving. After that, the multitude of the captives were allotted in like fashion, but to the chiefs only. Now these were women all, for the Greeks had kept but too well their cruel vow to put every male in Troy to the sword, even the babe at the breast. And first, Neoptolemus, being adjudged to have earned the highest meed of valour, received Andromache for prize, fairest of the Trojan dames, and illustrious above them all as great Hector's wife and widow. Then were the rest of the princesses assigned to their new masters,

and Cassandra fell to the share of Agamemnon. But as for the agéd Queen Hecuba, her reason had fled as she beheld the sword descending on Priam's grey hairs; from that moment her mind was a stranger to all that passed, and nothing seemed to touch her further. Now Odysseus, as was indeed his due, took a portion of spoil equal with the best, but reserved no captive for himself; and when his comrades urged him to choose a fair lady worthy of his deserts, he dryly answered, "Nay, friends, beauty is a toy I have no mind to, and other good in women I never met with save in one—Penelope, my wife. But since you urge me, I will take Queen Hecuba with handmaids enough to tend her, for I perceive she is not like to burden me long."

Then up rose Calchas the Seer, to whom had been given the lovely Polyxena, youngest of Priam's daughters, and he said, "For my part, I am bidden by a dream to offer my captive at Achilles' tomb, a gift of honour to his spirit on behalf of all the host. And meet it is we shed the blood of a Trojan maiden at our departing hence, in remembrance and retribution of Iphigeneia's death."

None gainsaying him, that deed was done forthwith; and they that mourned for Polyxena were not her companions in captivity, but the victors themselves. For the Greeks, beholding her youth and beauty, could not forbear to bewail her untimely doom; but Andromache and Cassandra and all her kinswomen took farewell of her even smiling, calling her happy and enviable in such a fate; and the virgin herself went to death as to a bridal, rejoicing

that she was delivered from worse things in the house of bondage. Insomuch that the Greeks marvelled saying, "Had the men of Troy been as valiant in soul as their women, surely we had never prevailed against them."

When these matters were ended, the host set joyfully about making ready their ships for launching, trusting in a few days' space to see the homes they had yearned for so long. But they reckoned without one who from their most powerful friend was turned to be their enemy, and that was Pallas Athena. For there is nothing more displeasing to the Immortals than that spirit of high-flown insolence which is begotten in men by great and sudden prosperity, and leads them to overstep the bounds of righteousness, neither fearing god nor regarding man. Filled with this spirit, the Greeks had not only exacted vengeance on their foes beyond measure, in that they spared neither the new-born babe nor him that stooped for age; they had pillaged the treasuries of the gods, even of those to whom they owed their victory, and burned their holy places with fire, openly boasting themselves conquerors by their own strength and in despite of the city's divine patrons. Most heinous of all, one among them had violated the sacred right of asylum that belonged to Athena's temple, by dragging a suppliant from the very feet of the goddess.

This impious and reckless transgressor was a namesake of Ajax of Salamis, and chieftain of the wild and warlike Locrian folk; men called him Ajax son of Oïleus, or Ajax the Less, to distinguish him from the mighty son of Telamon. He it was who found

Cassandra clinging to Athena's gold-robed image ; and in his ferocious mood he wound his bloodstained hands in the tresses that yet bore Apollo's sacred chaplet, and haled her, shrieking, from the sanctuary, not without such violence as it were shame to tell.

When this deed was known, the more part of the Greeks were for stoning Ajax Oileus, as one guilty of double sacrilege, because he had done outrage at once to a suppliant and a votaress of Apollo ; but his friends and well-wishers, warmly pleading his many valorous acts, secured his pardon on condition of his giving up Cassandra and forfeiting besides one half of his share in the spoils.

But the wrath of Athena was kindled against the Greeks ; and she stirred up Poseidon also to anger, complaining of their intolerable arrogance, and thanklessness towards their heavenly benefactors. "It is even as you say," answered Poseidon, "and so soon as these ingrates put forth upon my watery realm they shall learn by bitter lessoning that their boasted strength is a thing of nought. For I will vex them with all my storms, and drive their goodly ships like whirling leaves before the breath of my mouth."

Now it was not hidden from Calchas the Seer that evil was determined by Athena and Poseidon against the host, and he gave them warning not to sail until they had turned away the indignation of these gods by prayer and sacrifice. But none would heed, so eager were all hearts for home-faring, except King Agamemnon, and Nestor and Diomed. These three tarried yet five days, and on each day they prayed and sacrificed to Athena, and to Poseidon, Lord of

Waves, and vowed them tithes of all their booty if they reached home in safety. And a safe and speedy voyage was granted to all three; the good old Nestor ruled his folk yet many years in peace and honour; the brave Diomed lived to achieve other quests by sea and land; as for Agamemnon, the manner of welcome he had in his city of Mycenae shall presently be told.

It grieved the King of Argos much that for the first time his brother would not be swayed by his counsel; but Menelaus had recovered his Helen, and after a brief outburst of rage in which he threatened her life, had been moved by her tears to a pity that swiftly kindled into renewal of love; before that day ended, his one thought was to have his wife at his side again in their palace-hall. And so great was his haste, that his were the first ships to leave the Trojan shore. Those of Odysseus followed; for it was noteworthy in that prudent prince that he ever made small account of seer-craft, signs, and omens; "A wise man," he would say, "carries the best of diviners in his bosom."

And after these sailed the rest of the ships, except those of the chieftains I have named, and those of Neoptolemus. By command of Thetis, who appeared to him while he slept, he and all his following had already departed, journeying overland to the Strait called Hellespont, there to take ferry from the Asian to the European shore. For the goddess warned him by no means to sail for Scyros, because of the great tempest Poseidon was brewing, but to make by land for Phthia, the country of Peleus, where he should find his agéd grandfather yet alive, and

inherit his kingdom. Philoctetes also journeyed along with Neoptolemus, and came safe to his own land, according to the word of Heracles.

It was on a lovely morning of late summer that the Greek fleet stood out to sea, and blithe was every heart in the warrior multitude as they looked their last on the detested scene of so many toils, and felt once more under their feet the timbers of the gallant ships that were bearing them every moment nearer home. With laughter and song and the merry noise of flutes the beaked galleys swept onward over the blue, dancing waves, a fair wind filling their sails and lightening the rowers' task; the wine-skins went round among chieftains and retainers; the slaves had their share too—who would grudge it them on such a day as this?

And who but a keen-eyed helmsman or two could mark the cloud no bigger than a man's hand that was rising out of the sea, far to northward?

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Those who escaped with their lives out of that tempest were wont to declare that its coming blotted out the world of sunshine about them as swiftly as one may draw a curtain across a doorway. It may have been so, for Poseidon's was the hand that drew that curtain—Poseidon's the voice that swelled tenfold the roar of the hurricane as it swooped upon the reeling ships. Had the god worked his will, he would have engulfed them all in the black chasms that yawned for them on every side between the crests of monstrous billows; for he is one whose wrath, once kindled, gluts itself with destruction the most enormous.

Whole navies sucked down by the boiling deep—whole cities swallowed up by earthquake—these are among the dread marvels wrought by his trident's power. But Athena now stayed his hand, desiring to humble, but not to destroy utterly, her rebellious Greeks. And she saved alive every chief of note and name—albeit not without grievous loss of men and ships to each of them—except Ajax, son of Oïleus. He, when his vessel foundered beneath him, was tossed by a huge wave upon the summit of an islet-rock, in size no greater than a threshing-floor. There he clung awhile, and, perceiving himself lodged above reach of the raging seas, his savage heart was the more hardened; he laughed and shouted like a madman amid the clamour of winds and waters, hurling defiance at Athena, mocking her because she had done her worst, and he yet lived. But with a stroke of his trident Poseidon split the rock to its foundations, and whelmed the blasphemer fathoms deep in brine. Such an end had the Lesser Ajax, in whom was fulfilled the ancient and true saying—*Evil shall hunt the wicked person to overthrow him.*

Now of the Heroes that escaped in that awful hour of divine judgment, some fared straightway to their desired havens; but to others the gods appointed yet further trials and troubles ere they saw home again; whereof more anon.

The Voyaging of Teucer

When Poseidon in his wrath scattered the Greek fleet far and wide over the deep, the god was not unmindful of the single chieftain who forbore to plunder the holy places of Troy. Teucer, son of Telamon, had fought like a lion all through that night when the Trojans made their last stand on the thresholds of their burning homes, but he alone came empty-handed out of the sack of the city. And on the morrow, when division was made of the great booty and the crowd of captives, the sons of Atreus bade him

choose a portion equal to the best, for many bore witness to his valorous doings, amongst whom Odysseus was the loudest in his praise. But Teucer answered in the bitterness of his heart, "Will all the wealth of Priam's town ransom Ajax my brother out of Hades' prison-house? Or shall I, that am but the shadow of Ajax, take the meed of valour you denied to his living self? For the oath's sake that he and I swore to you in Aulis, I have fought your battle to an end; but now Troy is taken—and may the spoil thereof perish with the spoilers!" With that word he left them, and went straightway to his ships where they lay ready for launching, and so hoisted sail for home.

There was much talk of Teucer among the Greeks that day, and while some took his part, others blamed him for harbouring such fierce resentment against the brother kings; but what seemed marvellous to all was, that Odysseus should so eagerly extol one who bore him a special grudge. Odysseus, after his wont, kept his own counsel; and though he had testified that he saw Teucer rescue a Greek against heavy odds during the assault, he did not add, that the Greek was himself. For the remembrance of what had passed was not without gall to him, and of Teucer's silence he felt assured.

Now the rescue befell on this wise. Odysseus, while he gave chase to a band of flying Trojans, outstripped his comrades and plunged alone into a darksome alley, where the hunted men turned suddenly at bay. Armed only with their daggers—for they had been surprised before they could get them other weapons—they were yet eight against a single swordsman,

and they closed in on him with the fury of despair. But nimbly Odysseus set his back to a house-wall and valiantly laid about him, shouting, "A rescue! A rescue, sons of the Greeks!" "A rescue! Teucer to the rescue!" came a well-known voice in reply. Now, if Odysseus had the weasel's cunning, he lacked not its courage, and with his life at stake he must give rein to his mocking tongue. "Have a care, Archer!" cried he as Teucer darted to his side, "here is neither room nor light for target practice, but cut-and-thrust work that may spoil your bow for you."

"I bear no bow to night," answered Teucer fiercely, "but the sword of Ajax," and so saying he flung himself at the Trojans with uplifted blade. Three went down before his furious onset; two more Odysseus thrust through as they sprang at him; the others fled again, this time unpursued. For Odysseus had turned to gaze curiously on his rescuer, where he stood with bent head, trembling a little, and gripping the sword-hilt hard.

"Tell me, Teucer," he said, softly and suddenly, "why have you saved my life—and why have you now a mind to kill me?"

"One answer serves," said Teucer, between his teeth; "you were *his* comrade-in-arms."

It was spoken with a look that told Odysseus he was never nearer death than now. Master of fence though he was, his soul foreknew a conqueror in this novice; Teucer, perhaps, had scarce handled sword before, but against the deadly purpose in his eyes skill would avail as little as desperation had availed those Trojans, lifeless at his feet.

Odysseus saw the only way, and took it. Flinging down his falchion, he pointed to that which Teucer held, and calmly said, "Come, let the sword of Ajax strike one good blow more this night. For I think, ever since you drew it from his heart, you have thirsted to sheathe it in mine."

"No, by Zeus above us!" exclaimed Teucer, starting back, "that would defile for ever the steel his life-blood reddened. I *have* a mind to kill you—but with my bare hands and a noose of bowstring, as I would kill a treacherous hound. And yet—live, Odysseus, for if there be justice with the immortal gods, they have surely worse things than death in store for such as you." He turned sharply on his heel, and was gone.

"*Hound*, am I, friend Teucer?" murmured Odysseus, smiling to himself, as he picked up his sword and began to strip the slain men of their rich array. "Now I think you have more of the hound than I. Why else did I play the very trick on you that serves best with a savage watch-dog? Threaten him with voice or staff, he flies at your throat; drop your staff, sit down before him, and he will not touch you, snarl as he may." But however he plumed himself secretly on disarming Teucer, Odysseus ever after this gave him out for the bravest of the brave, and the most loyal-hearted of all men he had known.

Thus it was that Teucer with all his following set sail a day before the rest of the Greeks, having on board Tecmessa with her infant son, and the captives and spoil taken by Ajax in the war, and nothing besides that came from the land of Troy.

For this, as I have said, Poseidon remembered him, and wafted his ships on a straight course through the tempest to the harbour of Salamis.

The first thing Teucer saw on the harbour-wall was the white head of his father; for Telamon had never ceased to set watchers day by day, to bring him word when the ships of Ajax should be sighted. Behind the agêd King and his retainers crowded all the folk of the city, with laughter and with weeping, straining their eyes for the first glimpse of father, husband, or son. Then, as they marked that Teucer and all the crews were garbed in black, a wail of grief broke from the multitude; but King Telamon, making a stern gesture for silence, cried aloud, "Ajax! Where is Ajax, my son?"

Teucer essayed to answer, but he found no words. He snatched the sleeping babe from Tecmessa's arms, and, springing ashore, held it mutely towards his father, while the tears rolled down his cheeks. The old man regarded him fixedly for a moment, then in a terrible voice—"Coward!" he cried. "What have you done with Ajax? Did you not swear to defend him with your life—to perish with him rather than return alone? O, no words—he is dead, I know it—fallen nobly, as he lived—and you, who deserted him, sneak home with your brat and your women and cringe to *me* for a welcome! Take your shame hence! Begone, I say, lest I do you a mischief, and never dare set foot in Salamis while I live."

"Hear me, father," began Teucer, but the King interrupted fiercely:

"I will hear no traitor call me father! You are

no son of mine from henceforth ; I have but the one —nay, he is gone, too, my first-born, and my house is left utterly desolate."

"Not so—*King*," said Teucer, "for this babe is his child, not mine. Take your grandson, and may you live to see him a second Ajax in valour and in strength. But I, since the little love you ever bore me is turned to hatred, right willingly depart at your bidding. Yet ill, methinks, it befits a king to condemn the meanest man unheard."

Then swiftly he put the babe into his father's arms, and called the women ashore, and bade Tecmessa be of good cheer, for King Telamon would deal gently with her for the child's sake. And with a loud voice he hailed the crews, and said, "Friends, I go forth, as you have heard, a banished man. If any of you for love of Teucer will follow him into the wide world, he shall have a brother's share of what good fortune the gods may send me ; but let all who will abide here in peace."

Now there was not a chieftain in the Greek host more beloved of his men than Teucer, and their hearts burned within them to see him thus hardly used. Though they saw before them the homes and kindred they had pined for through weary years, they raised answering shouts of "Teucer! We will all go with Teucer! Shame befall us if we dwell at ease while he wanders homeless! Up sail again, and away from the land that casts out our brave prince!" And forthwith the crew of every ship fell to heaving of anchors and hoisting of sails, and unshipping the long oars again. But all the folk who saw it ran to the quay's

edge, calling lamentably on the names of their dear ones, and with outstretched arms besought them to stay.

As for Telamon, he had beckoned Tecmessa to approach, and laid the babe not ungently in her arms; but still he stood like one rooted to the spot, and, sunk in grief, neither heard nor heeded the tumult around him. Many an angry look was darted at him from among the throng, and the bolder spirits began to mutter that it were better to right Teucer by armed force than let the flower of Salamis follow him into exile.

But meanwhile Teucer sped from ship to ship, and as he thanked the crews from a full heart he bade them remember the sacred motherland, that mourned too many children already, fallen in the long war. "I will not bereave her utterly," he said. "Let the men who have wife and child, and the only sons of their mothers, remain, and the rest fare with me." So, having hardly prevailed with them, he manned two ships with comrades of his own age, who had gone as lads to Troy, and put forth from the harbour amid the tears and blessings of the people. Nor would he stay to victual his ships—only, he had the water-casks refilled from a spring beside the harbour, that his men might drink once more the water of Salamis—but made first for the near island of Aegina, whose folk were of all mortals the wealthiest and the most hospitable; and they made a great feast for the exiles, and sent them on their way with costly gifts and provision in abundance. After this, Teucer rounded safely the stormy Cape of Malea, and steered northward for the port of Cirrha, that lies nearest to Delphi,

being minded to inquire of Apollo in what land he should make his home. So he came to the holy temple, and Apollo, by the mouth of his prophetess, bade him voyage southward and eastward until he reached a great island called Cyprus; for there he should found a city in a fruitful domain, and name it Salamis. Many weeks he sailed on that quest, and at many an isle he disembarked, but none of them proved to be Cyprus. At last the wanderers sighted at sunrise the white, gleaming cliffs of a small isle, and a long coast-line behind it, misty and low-lying. So much as they could see of the isle appeared desert, and when they had beached their ships in a cove among the cliffs, Teucer bade the rest make ready a meal, while he went to spy if any dwelt inland, and what manner of folk they were.

A path led up from that cove to the top of the isle, which was flat as any table, and partly wooded, partly turf-clad down. No sign of folk or dwelling could Teucer see, until he had crossed the table-land and looked down on the farther shore. There, to his wonder, stood a great mansion with courts and colonnades, all of dark-red stone, and the fashion of the building and the masonry was unlike any he had seen. The face of the cliff under him was terraced with hanging gardens of strange, vivid flowers, and a broad stairway, cut in the limestone, wound from terrace to terrace. Down this he hastened, trusting to find hospitality in that stately house, and learn his course for Cyprus.

Then he saw that the landward front of the house was a lofty and massive wall, having no windows, but

a central doorway of great height, and the folding doors therein were shut; and as he went towards it he marked on his left hand a small chapel of black marble, and a tomb of the same before the chapel, beside which stood a tall, fair-haired woman, richly apparelled.

"Lady," he said to her, "of your courtesy, tell me the name of this place, and who is lord of so royal a house?"

But scarce had he said this when, staring amazedly on her face, he cried, "O heavenly gods, what do I see? Are you—can you be, *Helen?* Nay, nay," he muttered, "I dream—how could the accursed wretch be here?—and yet—so like, so like! Now by the soul of Ajax, if it *is* Helen, I will kill her though I die for it."

"Stranger," said the lady, haughtily, "I know not of whom you speak, and desire to hear no more of these wild words." And she looked him full in the eyes, with the air of an offended queen.

"Grant me pardon, Lady," said Teucer, much abashed, "for most marvellously do you resemble one whom every Greek holds in utter loathing. My blood boils even to think of that golden-haired fiend, and the hundreds of brave men that have died for her wicked sake."

"Speak of her no more," said the lady hastily, "but tell me who you are, and what you seek here."

Then Teucer told her his name and story, and when he spoke of Troy she said, "I have heard of that renowned city, and how the Greeks laid siege to it, to win back his wife for King Menelaus. Some say

it will never be taken, so gallantly and so long have the Trojans held out."

"They say wrong, then," said Teucer, "for it was taken the night before I came thence, and burned with fire, and by this there is not one stone of it left upon another, for we had sworn to raze it even to the ground."

"Troy is taken?" exclaimed the lady; "then did Menelaus—I mean—did you hear the fate of—his wife?"

"Hear it?" replied Teucer, "nay, I saw it with my own eyes. Menelaus, the fond fool, would not deal her the doom she merited, for all our urging, but sent her on board his ship under strong guard. And if they 'scaped shipwreck in the tempest coming homeward, I make no doubt she is queening it once more in Sparta."

"What!" gasped the lady. "This false Helen—" and seemed to choke upon the words.

"Well may you say *false*," said Teucer, "but when you say *Helen* you give her a worse name still—ay, one that shall be infamous to the world's end. But what ails you, noble dame? You are white as death."

"It is nothing," she answered faintly; "your tale, courteous stranger, brings back cruel memories—that is all. I, too, have suffered exile—and the loss of all that makes life dear."

Her words, and sad, sweet dignity, touched the young man to the heart, and he was about to ask if he could serve her in any way, when she continued, hurriedly, "But we talk too long—why do I keep you here in peril? Know that the land you see yonder is Egypt, and this is the summer-palace of the King, who, alas! so mortally hates your countrymen that

he puts to death every Greek, high or low, that enters his dominions. By heaven-sent chance, he is following the chase to-day, but any moment some of his people may see you from the palace wall. O, fly, I entreat you, and go warily, lest you fall in with him and his train. Haste aboard your ship, and may the gods bring you to your desired haven. Farewell, farewell!"

So saying, she glided swiftly within the chapel, and Teucer saw her no more.

"That was a strange encounter," thought he, as he cautiously retraced his steps across the isle, "and why a woman who, I dare wager my life, is noble and virtuous, should be the living image of the vile traitress Helen, the gods alone know. Certainly, the likeness can be only skin-deep, for yonder lady's speech and manner bear the very stamp of truth."

Now, here we take leave of Teucer, son of Telamon, because this was the last of his adventures, and when he had safely rejoined his comrades, they came with a fair wind to a spacious island-haven, crowded with Phoenician merchant vessels. And from the dark-skinned Phoenician traders they learned that this was Cyprus at last, where that busy folk had built themselves thriving seaport towns. There did the exiles found a new Salamis, and took wives from among the island people; good luck abode with them according to Apollo's word, and the posterity of Teucer reigned as kings in Cyprus for many ages.

But as for Telamon, he lived to see his grandchild become a gallant youth, and when he died full of years and honours, the son of Ajax ruled over Salamis in his stead.

Of the marvel that befell in Egypt

SCARCELY had Teucer made good his retreat from the King of Egypt's palace when its tall doors were flung open, and there issued forth a group of persons who advanced slowly and silently to the tomb before the chapel. First came four small negro boys, bearing on their heads flat baskets heaped with lotus flowers ; next walked a woman of regal aspect, robed in pure white, and having a jewelled diadem of strange device on her blue-black hair. On either side of her,

a dusky, gaily-clad girl held up a fan of gilded palm-leaf to shade her from the sun; and behind her stalked two gigantic negroes armed with broad-headed javelins and round targes of leopard-skin, their heavy silver collars and armlets clanking as they moved.

Halting beside the tomb, the four boys kneeled and presented their baskets to their mistress, who scattered the blue lotus-blooms upon it, murmuring the while some rhythmic prayer or invocation. This done, she approached the door of the chapel and called in grave, musical tones, "Good morrow, Helen. Why do you hide within there?"

The Lady with whom Teucer had spoken stole timidly forth. "O, Theonoe," she exclaimed, "I have been so affrighted! Teucer, son of Telamon, has been here—he is but this moment gone. He knew me at once, and was ready to murder me then and there. Dear Princess, conceive my terror!"

The Princess Theonoe heard this without the least sign of surprise, and tranquilly replied, "But you convinced him, doubtless, that you were *not* Helen?"

"Yes," said the other in some confusion, "at least—he seemed to think I could not be. But as we talked, I almost betrayed myself, and to get rid of him I had to pretend that your brother—*kills* all Greek strangers. I begged him to depart instantly from the island; and I trust he has, for he only landed, he said, to learn his course for Cyprus, where Apollo had bidden him found a city."

"And did not Teucer," asked the Princess, smiling subtilly, "give you strange news—from Troy?"

"Ah," exclaimed Helen in a tone of awe, "I see it

Of Theonoe, she exclaimed, Teucer, son of Telamon has been here

is true what they say, that you know more than other mortals. You knew Troy was taken, you knew the incredible thing that has befallen, by that mysterious power you have from the gods. And you told me nothing! Was that kind, Theonoe?"

"I had nothing to tell you," replied the Egyptian, "that was not better kept from your knowledge—until to-day."

"But now you will tell me more?" cried Helen eagerly. "O, you must; I *must* know who and what this woman is—this counterfeit whom all, even my husband, take for me."

Tears brimmed her great, grey eyes as she spoke, and with a sob she added, "What have I done, Theonoe, that the gods make such cruel sport of me? Hated in Hellas—my name a byword—my beauty a reproach—and I all the while eating my heart in a strange land, guiltless of the evil they lay to my charge as the babe unborn."

"Do not weep," said Theonoe gently, "all may yet be well. Come, return with me to the house, for the sun grows hot, and we will talk of all this at leisure."

So saying, she led Helen within the palace; and while they reclined on couches of alabaster in the cool, rose-scented twilight of a pillared hall, the Princess began to speak as follows.

"It is a year to-day, fair Helen, since King Proteus, my beloved father, passed into the World of Souls; and as I stood even now beside his tomb, I renewed the promise I gave him in his last hour to cherish and protect the beauteous guest whom Zeus sent to his keeping nine years before. Mindful of that promise,

I have thwarted the design of my brother to make you his Queen against your will; and trust me, though he is a headstrong wooer, you have nothing to fear from him while I stand your friend. No, although it pleases you to fancy that you are only safe within the sanctuary yonder, it is needless to haunt it as you do."

Theonoe paused, regarding her guest with a smile of gentle mockery; but, seeing her flush and pout like a chidden child, stroked her arm caressingly, and went on: "As you have heard, it is indeed given me to look at times through the veil that hides things to come, and read a little in the scroll of Fate; and I am about to speak to you more freely than hitherto, because the Lifters of the Veil have shown me that the hour whereon your destiny depends is close at hand."

"May it be my last," said Helen, weeping anew, "if the gods have more sorrows in store for a hapless innocent."

"*Innocent*," repeated Theonoe, doubtfully, and as Helen flashed an indignant look upon her, she continued: "Be not offended; remember that the high gods judge not as men judge, by the outward act, but search the thoughts and intents of the heart. If you would understand their dealings with you, ask yourself this—Did you not lend willing ear to that courtly stranger-prince who tempted you to fly with him to his gorgeous East?"

A lovely blush glowed on Helen's cheek. "I may have listened," she murmured, "but I told Paris I never would consent."

"And yet," persisted her questioner, "when you stole out before daybreak to meet him in your garden

of roses, you knew he had prepared for your flight together that same hour ? "

" I went to bid him farewell—to say I could not go with him," faltered Helen ; " and—ah, Theonoe, do you know this too ?—it was not Paris who met me in the dim dawn, who threw his arms about me ere I could speak ! It was a stranger, a shepherd lad. He laughed at my cry of terror—and I swooned, and knew nothing more until I found myself—here."

" It was the divine Shepherd, Hermes," said Theonoe, " the herald and messenger of Zeus. I was a child then, but the Gift had begun to come to me ; and in a dream by night it was revealed to me who the wondrous lady was that my father found asleep on the sea-shore, and why she had been sent into his keeping."

" O that he were alive to guard me still," cried Helen, " in him I too lost a father—the kindest, the most revered ! But you, Theonoe—you have said it—you will still befriend me, aid me, for his sake ? "

" To the utmost of my power," replied the Princess, gravely. " It concerns the honour of his unsullied name that the pledge entrusted to him should be restored safely to its rightful owner."

" And is there still hope for that ? " asked Helen earnestly. " When we heard the Greek host was beleaguering Troy, I asked you why the Trojans did not declare they had never seen me, but you only smiled and shook your head ; so I thought, ' No doubt Menelaus does not believe them, but when the city falls he will find they spoke truly.' But now it is taken—and he is deluded by some wicked witch, as it seems the Trojans were. Is it not so, Theonoe ?

Is she not one of those baleful sorceresses that can take what shape they will ? "

" It is not by enchantment, but of her own nature," answered Theonoe, "that she wears your likeness. For soul makes the body, Helen, and she is your soul's double, part of your own self."

" Part of myself ! " cried Helen, amazedly. " What can you mean ? What part ? "

" The part that listened to Paris," replied Theonoe, " even while something else in you revolted from the thought of treason to your wedded lord. You do not yet understand ; but hearken, and I will make all plain. Not your soul only, but every human soul has a shadowy double, which we Egyptians call the Ka. The soul alone is immortal, for that alone is from the gods ; yet the Ka dies not with the body, and while the body still lives it has power to quit it, coming and going as it lists. It is the Ka we see when in dreams or waking visions the forms of the absent or the dead appear to us. Earthly passions and desires belong to the Ka ; the soul knows them not, being divine, but oftentimes it is overcome and led astray by its mortal yoke-fellow, which it ought to govern and subdue. And for this, Helen, the soul must render account when it is called at last before its Judges."

The Egyptian uttered these words in a low and solemn voice, and remained silent. Helen regarded her with a troubled, awestruck countenance. " I see, now," she whispered, " Zeus sent me here to save me from my—other self. And *that* went with Paris to Troy. But how could a shadowy thing be taken for a living woman—even by—my husband ? "

"With the gods, all things are possible," answered Theonoe.

"Then he will never know—never seek for me," said Helen wildly, "O, I am lost indeed! This evil thing——"

"Not evil," interrupted the Princess, "but of the earth, earthy. Only the soul is good or evil, since it can choose to do right or wrong; the Ka cannot choose; it must follow pleasure blindly, like the beasts that perish."

As she said this, the noonday hush that reigned over the palace was broken by a sound of voices raised in loud dispute, which seemed to proceed from the hall of entrance. The clang of brazen doors shut with violence followed, then all was still again. Theonoe clapped her hands, and as one of her maidens glided in, "Go, Iras," said she, "and bring me word what means that unseemly clamour."

Iras speedily returned, and kneeled before the Princess, who made her a sign to speak.

"Most gracious Lady," said the damsel, "Here has been a sturdy beggar at the gate, crazy withal, who demanded with unheard of insolence to see our lord the King, saying he is himself a king, one Menelaus of Sparta. Perceiving him to be some madman, the guards did the wretch no hurt, but thrust him forth without more ado."

"Menelaus!" shrieked Helen, springing to her feet. "Can this be true, Theonoe?"

"Leave us, Iras," said the Princess, calmly arising, and as the damsel withdrew, she placed a hand on either shoulder of her trembling guest, and kissed

her on the brow. "Courage, Queen of Sparta," she said; "now call up all your strength, for the hour is come and the man. Your own ready wit will best serve you in this strait—think how it baffled Teucer—but remember above all that if my brother learns Menelaus is here, his jealous rage will know no bounds. I will see to it that the household tell him nothing; do you meet your husband by the chapel yonder, where he may take sanctuary at need, and devise some means of flight together. For this is a matter I must have no hand in—unless the worst befall, and then I shall not fail you. Go, now, and the gods prosper you."

Forth sped Helen, too bent upon her errand to mark that Theonoe followed her to the palace portal and signed to the negroes who kept guard there to open the massive doors. They closed behind her, and she advanced with beating heart towards a tall figure standing in a posture of dejection beside the tomb of Proteus. But could *that* be Menelaus—that gaunt, weatherbeaten man with grizzled locks unkempt, and a single discoloured garment hanging in tatters about him? Menelaus, who went ever sleek and splendid, loving to deck his full-flown comeliness in purple and fine linen! "Father Zeus, have pity on us!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

Menelaus raised his head and eyed her curiously. "Are you a Greek, Lady?" he asked; "I should guess so by your accent and complexion. But a Greek among these barbarians——"

"Menelaus!" she cried, coming closer, "Do you not know me?"

"Strange, by the gods!" he muttered, and scanned her narrowly, but shook his head.

"My lord," said Helen in a voice that quivered, "am I so changed? I am Helen, your wife. O, how I have prayed for this meeting!" She ceased, overcome by tears, and held out her arms in silence.

"You are like her, incredibly like her," said Menelaus slowly; "indeed, I could almost think you *are* Helen, only—I happen to know she is—elsewhere."

"Ah, the phantom," cried his wife with a pang of recollection. "But listen, Menelaus, *I* never went to Troy; the Helen you found there is a wraith—a shadow; the gods cheated Paris with her, but me they carried here, that day you lost me."

"You speak like a madwoman," answered he angrily. "What you mean, or who you are, I cannot guess."

"I am the woman you wedded," said Helen passionately. "You *cannot* have forgotten me utterly. Look, do you not remember this?" She bared one rose-white shoulder and pointed to a tiny cinque-spotted mole.

Menelaus stared thereon with a puzzled frown. "This is beyond me," he said. "You are Helen over again, even to that mark she has. I used to call it Aphrodite's seal. But you cannot deceive me, for all that—so have done with your feigning."

Helen was at her wit's end. There was not a moment to be lost; if her husband could not or would not recognise her, it only remained to bid him escape while yet he might. But could she endure to lose him for ever—to renounce the last hope of seeing home again? Like a figure instantaneously disclosed by lightning in darkness, she saw herself in

years to come; lonely, loveless, not even beautiful, a dependent on the bounty of that strange, cold Theonoe who had never liked her; a friendless exile, pining for the hills of Sparta under the unchanging, hateful blue of Egypt's sky. Then—sight yet more bitter—she saw that Other, mysteriously one with her, yet so deadly a rival, usurping her own place; the happy, honoured wife of Menelaus. "Never, never!" she said within herself, "rather will I see him slain before my face." And no sooner had her mind formed the words than she knew them to be utterly false; with a sudden, uplifting sense of power it was borne in on her that, come what might, she was going to save her husband's life.

"Forgive the jest, Menelaus," she said the next instant, "it was a sorry one and an ill-timed, but I will speak now in sober earnest. I am a Greek and a friend, and come to warn you that you must flee this isle at once; for if Egypt's King, who dwells in yonder house, should find you here, he will straightway kill you."

"Kill the King of Sparta!" cried Menelaus. "He would never dare. Besides, the King of Egypt has no quarrel with the Greeks—why, pray, *should* he kill me?"

"Because," said Helen, forgetting her newly assumed character in her eagerness, "he persecutes me to wed with him, and I have told him a thousand times I will never hear of that *until I know you are dead.* Is that not reason enough for a ruthless tyrant, who thinks that only your life stands between him and his desire?"

"By all the gods," exclaimed Menelaus, "what your marriage has to do with my being dead or alive I cannot conceive. Stay—I have it; *you have made this King of yours believe that you are Helen!* Infamous pretender, what coil of deceit have you woven and to what end?"

Helen wrung her hands with vexation at the slip she had made. "O, waste not precious time," she cried; "your safety is all that matters now. Tell me, how came you hither in such wretched plight—where did you leave your ship?"

"My ship is at the bottom of the sea," answered Menelaus gloomily. "A fearful tempest overtook us as we sailed from Troy, and we were driven for days we knew not whither. When the storm abated we sighted land, and heard from some folk in fishing-boats that it was Egypt; whereupon we steered northward again, but headwinds beat us back continually for weeks and months. And this morning our ship struck a hidden reef, and sank so quickly that we had barely time to leap overboard. By the mercy of Zeus we were near this isle, and all strong swimmers—I especially—and so we saved our lives. But nothing else—my Trojan spoils, my splendid arms and apparel, all went down with the ship. What a loss, great gods! It is enough to distract a man's wits, only to think thereon."

"What of—your wife?" Helen could not forbear asking.

"I swam to shore with her," replied Menelaus, "a feat of strength beyond most men, though I say it. To me, however, her weight appeared scarce more than

a feather's. I left her and all our crew in a great cavern of the cliffs while I went to seek some aid—and how shamefully I, a King, was received at yonder abode of savages, you doubtless know."

At this moment Helen espied a man speeding toward them along the shore, and waving his arms as he ran. "Look," she cried, pointing, "we are seen! Into the chapel quickly—none will dare touch you there."

"Nay, it is but Helen's old slave," said Menelaus, and cried out imperiously, "How now, Xanthias? Did I not bid you keep guard over your Lady?"

"Alas, Lord," panted the slave, drawing near, "I bring tidings—dreadful tidings." He paused, and stood open-mouthed, staring upon Helen with eyes that seemed bursting from their sockets.

"What tidings, fool?" said his master angrily. "Why do you stand there gaping? Speak, I say."

But the old man suddenly seized Helen's hand and began to kiss and fondle it with chuckling cries of delight. "Ah, my darling mistress," he babbled, "what a trick to play your poor old Xanthias! How could you have the heart to frighten him so? But did you put some spell on us, my Queen, or were we dreaming?"

Menelaus seized him by the shoulder, and dragged him from Helen's side. "Have you gone mad?" he shouted; "your tidings, this instant."

"Why, my gracious Lord," stammered Xanthias, "I—I came to tell you our Lady was gone from us—but she is here, praise the gods, so all's well again."

"Dolt!" thundered Menelaus. "This is not Helen, but a cunning impostor. Now tell me plainly

what has happened, and quickly too, or you shall rue provoking me thus."

"We were all sitting there," said the bewildered old man, "sitting outside the cave and drying our garments in the sun—when my Lady arose and looked upon us with a most singular smile. Then said she, '*Ah, hapless Greeks and more hapless Trojans! Ah, towers and town of Priam, fallen for nought! Behold the phantom Helen's part is played, and the gods restore the true Helen to her lord. Now am I free to roam the fields of air once more.*' And with outspread arms she fluttered upwards like a bird—and vanished out of our sight."

Menelaus heard this like one thunderstruck. "*The phantom. . . .* She was a phantom!" was all he could utter; but Helen flung herself into his arms, crying, "Did I not tell you so? Husband, will you not own me now?

"I do, I do," he said brokenly. "You *are* my Helen, my true wife. But that other—a phantom! All this is too much for me—my brain reels."

"You shall understand all soon," murmured Helen, clasping him closer; "but now our one thought must be escape, for the King may return from hunting at any hour."

"Let him return," said Menelaus, drawing himself up haughtily, "I shall demand my wife of him, and upbraid him with the churlish manners of his household; and when he hears it was the conqueror of Troy they drove from the door, he will be shamed into making me amends. Ay, and now I bethink me, I have heard men praise the wisdom of Egypt's King—so I doubt

not he can be reasoned with. *I* shall know how to deal with him, never fear!"

"O, hush and listen to me," cried Helen. "It was the good Proteus of whom you heard, but alas, he lies in this very tomb, and now his son Theoclymenus is King. I tell you again, he is the most ruthless of tyrants—you might as well hope to make winds and waves hear reason. The only being he will pay heed to is his elder sister, who has protected me from his violence. She, Theonoe, is the holiest and wisest of women, and so marvellously gifted by the gods that nothing is hidden from her. She knew you would come to-day, she sent me to warn of you your peril and devise escape, and promised not to betray us to her brother."

"Then, if she is your friend," said Menelaus, "why does she not provide us means of flight? You had best ask her for a ship, for how else we are to come by one I do not see."

"I cannot, knowing her as I do," answered Helen. "She is a lover of truth, and once I heard her say that if ever she spoke a false word, her gift would leave her; so how could she share in our plot to outwit the King?"

"But what is our plot to be?" asked her husband. "Myself, I see nothing for it but to defy this tyrant to his face and die as a brave man should."

"And leave *me* at his mercy?" exclaimed Helen. "You would not be so cruel!"

"Fear not that," he replied loftily; "I mean to kill you first and then myself. We will perish together, dearest! No man shall ever boast he has

married the widow of King Menelaus." He folded his arms, regarding her majestically.

But a thought had flashed on Helen as he spoke. "I have the device, I have it," she cried, clapping her hands; "Theoclymenus shall think I *am* your widow. I shall say news has come of your being drowned at sea——"

"And what good will that do us?" interrupted Menelaus. "Besides, he will ask how the news came —and where is your messenger?"

"*You* are the messenger, of course," replied Helen impatiently; "you are a sailor, the only survivor from the wreck. O, I see it all; bear me out if you are questioned, and leave me to tell the story to the King. Xanthias, do you steal back to the cave and bid our crew lie close a while longer; and you, Menelaus, sit here by the tomb while I make ready to play my part."

Low and rapidly she spoke, but her voice had a new tone of command; her languid grace of bearing was transformed to alertness, her soft eyes sparkled with resolve. After an astonished glance at her, both men silently obeyed, and with quick, light steps she re-entered the palace.

Menelaus had not sat long beside the tomb, pondering what Helen's device could profit them, when a train of huntsmen and their dogs descended the flowery terraces of the cliff, headed by the King. Theoclymenus was a young man of fine presence; his features resembled his sister's, but lacked her serenity; from his lowering brow it might be guessed that the day's sport had not been to his mind. At his sign

of dismissal, the train withdrew to the rear of the palace; he himself was approaching the great doorway, when Helen came forth again, in such guise that Menelaus scarce forbore a cry of dismay. Her glorious hair was cropped close, her face whitened to ghastliness, and a coarse black mantle enveloped her completely. The astounded King hurried to meet her, exclaiming, "Lady of my heart, what sudden woe is this? Whom do you mourn—not, O, say it is not my sister?"

"I mourn my husband," answered Helen, and therewith broke into a storm of weeping.

And now had Menelaus cause to marvel at a woman's wit, as with many a sob and sigh she replied to the King's eager questioning. Of himself, Theoclymenus asked nothing, and indeed his forlorn aspect gave all needful warrant to Helen's story. Well it was that the Egyptian hardly deigned to glance at the ragged sailor, or he must have marked that a scowl of rage deformed his countenance, and that he seemed from time to time to be wrestling with some violent emotion. And truly, Menelaus had much ado to contain himself while Theoclymenus, taking Helen's reluctant hand, addressed her in these words:

"Believe me, O World's Desire, I mourn with you the death of so gallant a prince as report speaks Menelaus, yet I scorn to conceal that I count it a surpassing gain to myself. For to all my pleading, you have ever answered that while he lived, you were his alone. And trust me, Lady, not less than your peerless beauty has this constancy made you precious in my sight. But now, put away unavailing sorrow,

for the gods have given you a second husband, neither less royal nor, I promise you, less tender, than him they have taken hence. Nay, nay, withdraw not this lovely hand; let it rest in mine, as the token of our troth-plight."

"Great Lord of Egypt," answered Helen, casting down her eyes, "if the hand of a faded, desolate woman seem to you worth the taking, it is freely yours."

At these words, both her hearers started violently; but Helen, while she eluded the King's outstretched arms, darted at Menelaus a glance so expressive, that he controlled his rising fury. "Tarry, my Lord," she said to Theoclymenus; "there is a boon I must crave of you."

"Name it, fairest of women," replied the happy suitor, "and take it, to the half of my kingdom."

"Before we wed," she continued, "I would fain pay the rites of sepulture to Menelaus, according to the custom of our land."

"You shall do so," said the King, "and I, for my part, will raise such a monument in his honour as has never been seen in Egypt. But what manner of funeral rites do the Greeks pay to those who are lost at sea?"

"I will tell you," said Helen. "We have a ship manned and provisioned as for a voyage, and freight it with offerings to the departed—jewels and robes, and golden vessels, and good store also of weapons and armour, if the lost one be a warrior. Thereon the chief mourners embark, and having gone far out to sea—that nought may be washed ashore—they cast their gifts overboard, with meat-offerings and

drink-offerings in abundance, calling on the dead to accept them with favour, and so return. This I would do for Menelaus, lest if he lie unhonoured in his vast and wandering grave his spirit haunt us for evil, bringing a curse upon our house."

"I will give instant command," said the King, "to make ready a ship well provided as you have said, and the offerings shall be of the costliest my treasury contains. Only, it likes me not that you should go in person, for now I cannot bear you out of my sight. Cannot another—cannot this sailor here, do the office of chief mourner in your stead?"

"What, a man of low degree?" said Helen reproachfully.

"True, that were unseemly," said Theoclymenus. "I will go myself, then. The King of Egypt will pay the last honours to a brother king."

"Royally spoken," said she, "but not even your illustrious presence could atone for my neglect of a sacred duty. It is I, his nearest, who must fulfil the solemn rite, and no mourner of alien race must take part therein; for so is the custom of our land."

"Be it as you will," answered the King, something sullenly, "for I am loth to cross you at such a time." So saying, he went hastily within the palace.

It was easily seen that he was a master whose commands brooked no delay, so quickly went forward the business of making ready that ship. In two hours' space a noble galley of fifty oars lay manned and freighted by the pier of marble that jutted from the shore; her sails were set; Helen embarked, closely followed by the ragged sailor; and as the galley stood

out to sea, Theoclymenus watched with admiration the graceful, black-robed figure leaning against the stern in the attitude of profound sorrow.

"Certainly," thought he, "all has turned out for the best. This grief of Helen's for a man she has not seen these ten years proves what a constant wife I shall have in her; and it is great good luck that Menelaus was drowned instead of getting to shore like yonder sailor, for it saves me the unpleasantness of killing him."

Wrapped in musings on happiness to come, Theoclymenus could enjoy to the full his mid-day repast, the more so as he had delayed that refreshment in his zeal to oversee the lading of the galley with offerings worthy of his magnificence. He feasted alone; for Theonoe, who lived on fare of the simplest, and drank only spring water, never appeared at the board. But the meal over, he hurried to the women's quarter of the palace, eager to receive her felicitations on the event of the day, and learned with disappointment from her handmaids that the Princess desired to be alone. In this, however, there was nothing unusual; Theonoe was wont to pass much of her time in seclusion, reading and meditating the secret lore of ancient scrolls, written by the hands of priests. Not even the King ventured to disturb her at these times; he betook himself to the shore again, there to await Helen's return with what patience he might.

Lower and lower sank the sun towards his Ocean bed, and still no sail appeared in the offing; and still, though he waxed more and more impatient, no shadow of uneasiness crossed the young man's mind. He

heartily wished that obedience to Greek custom did not require offerings to the drowned to be made so far out at sea; but that was the sole reason for Helen's long delay that came into his head.

What, then, was his amazement when he heard the patter of many bare feet behind him, and turning, saw the entire crew of the galley running along the beach towards the palace! With a furious cry, he rushed to intercept them; and at sight of him, the fifty slaves threw themselves on their faces, as giving themselves up for lost. "Dogs, and sons of dogs," exclaimed their lord, "what means this? Where is the ship? Where is Queen Helen? If harm has come to her, you shall all be flayed alive. Where is she, I say—why do not you answer me, wretches?"

But the slaves only grovelled about his feet, speechless with excess of terror. Transported by rage, the King seized the nearest by the throat, uttering horrid threats and brandishing his dagger; at that moment a hand touched his shoulder, and the calm voice of Theonoe said, "Forbear, my brother. These men are guiltless. Be not so unkingly as to visit on them the act of others, but promise them life and favour if they declare truly what has befallen."

"You know, Theonoe," answered he, "that I can refuse you nothing. On your assurance, I will hold the slaves guiltless. Let them arise, then, and speak. You, there, the steersman, say on, and say quickly."

Then the men rose up, no longer trembling; they cast on Theonoe such looks as worshippers might on a protecting goddess; and the steersman told his tale with a good courage.

"O Sun of Egypt," he said, "by your august command I and my fellows obeyed the Greek Queen as we would have done yourself. Now, when we had gone but a little way, she said to me, 'Turn the ship about, friend, and steer as this sailor shall pilot you;' and the shipwrecked sailor directed our course to the far side of the isle, where is the great cavern, and the water is deep inshore; there he made me bring the galley to land. Then indeed we smelt treason, for behold, upwards of fifty men ran to us out of the cavern, whom we perceived to be Greeks. But the sailor said to us, 'Fear nothing; these are comrades of mine who have likewise escaped out of the shipwreck; let them come aboard, that they may take part in—what we have to do.' So they came, and immediately that villain sailor caught up sword and shield and gave some of these men the rest of the weapons that were to be offered to Menelaus; then he cried, 'Out of the galley, Egyptians, or you are all dead men.' Alas, Lord, what could we do against those ruffians, unarmed as we were, and they great, sturdy fellows every one? They flew upon us like lions; they thrust us overboard at the sword's point; yet with more mirth than ill-will, it seemed, for loudly they laughed as we in our haste fell splash into the water and swam ashore for our lives. The Greeks took our places at the oars and backed the galley out with mighty strokes; as they put her head to sea, I saw Queen Helen wave to us from the deck, and merrily she laughed—and that most accursed of all sailors took her in his arms and kissed her."

Theoclymenus bounded where he stood, "The vile

traitress," he cried, "then all her story was a lie—a plot to escape me! But the man—her accomplice, whence came he—who is he?"

"Do you not guess?" said Theonoe. "Menelaus himself. This much of the tale was true, that he *was* shipwrecked off our coasts, whither storm and tempest had driven him, not without providence divine. As to the rest—ask yourself, my brother, why Helen dared not tell you he was here alive."

"I may rather ask *you*," said the King bitterly, "why, knowing their plot as you know all else, you suffered them to befool and laugh to scorn the brother who loves you so well."

"And whom I love not less well," answered Theonoe soothingly, taking him by the hand. "Come, Theoclymenus, let us go within, for I have much to say to you. Come, the sun has set, and it is the hour of your evening banquet; this once I will share it with you, that I may see you refuse not food and wine, the comforters of man's heart."

The wise Princess had her will; and the King's mood softened in spite of himself while she plied him with the good cheer before them. And then she brought him to her chamber, where the great southern moon looked in through casements opening on the sea and paled the radiance of seven golden lamps fed with perfumed ambergris. The lofty walls were covered with row on row of bright-hued blazonry—the loves and wars of bygone monarchs, the incarnations as beast or bird of the strange gods of Nile, displayed in endless processions of solemn and fantastic figures. Theonoe motioned her brother to a

many-pillowed couch, seated herself near him in a chair of ivory, and began to speak in low and lulling tones, slowly waving the while a fan of ibis plumes. Even thus from his childhood Theoclymenus had delighted to hear her relate the wonder-tales of ancient Egypt, and those scarcely less marvellous doings of kings and heroes beyond the sea which her mystic gift revealed to her ken.

Like one that had seen it all did Theonoe now unfold the story of Troy's downfall from the beginning; the birth and rearing of Paris, his judgment of the Goddesses, his quest of the World's Desire; the ten years' siege, and how it ended. The King listened earnestly, and when she ceased he said, "All this woe, then, was wrought by Aphrodite. The flower of the Greeks, the race and city of Priam, have perished by reason of the bribe she offered Paris. And of that bribe she tricked him by a counterfeit! Can there indeed be such perfidy in minds celestial?"

"To that goddess," replied his sister, "I have never rendered worship, as you know; yet let us beware of rash words concerning her whose power is so great in earth and heaven. It may be, Aphrodite would have given Paris the true Helen if she could; but Zeus, Lord of all, who overrules in his wisdom the purposes of the other Immortals, would not have it so. For you must know that Helen, though born of a mortal mother, is not as other women; she is as it were a sacred vessel, formed and set apart by divine hands to be a pattern on earth of the Beauty that is heavenly. Therefore Zeus would not suffer her to come to dishonour, but in the hour of

temptation she was rapt away to a place of safety and of peace—for such to her was this house while our father ruled it."

Theoclymenus reddened at the last words, and hastily said, "I have deserved that reproach, my sister, but perhaps I should not have done so had you told me these things earlier. How could I know that Helen was in a manner sacred, and under the especial protection of high Zeus?"

"It should have been enough," said Theonoe gently, "that you knew her to be a guest, a stranger, and defenceless. For all such are the especial care of Zeus. But I meant not to reproach you—nay, dearest brother, rather should I crave your forgiveness for having thwarted even in duty's cause the desire of your heart. My prayer is, our love for each other may yet bring you truer happiness than you could have known with Helen."

"Theonoe," exclaimed her brother, melted almost to tears, "I were a heartless ingrate indeed if I did not prize such a love as yours above all else on earth! And so I do—and you shall see it, though I have yielded too long to passion and blind folly; by the soul of Proteus, you shall find me a changed man from this day. Happier with you than with Helen! Ay, truly; for now it is as though scales had fallen from mine eyes, and I behold that in your face which hers lacks for all its beauty. It is truth, Theonoe, the stainless truth of your soul shining forth—a light wherein a man may trust. I need but look at you to know you would die a thousand deaths rather than weave the tissue of lies that Helen has done this day."

Theonoe pressed his hand and said, with her rare and lovely smile, "But those falsehoods, remember, were told to save not herself but the man she loved. And if Helen is not one to die for truth's sake, she would have died for *him*—yes, Theoclymenus, she has the courage to do that and more than that, though she ever seemed compact of sweet weaknesses. For was it not more bitter than death to her, to bid Menelaus depart, knowing that she would never see him more—to confess that she had only pretended to be Helen for a foolish jest, and so let him leave her like a stranger, without a word to still the heart-hunger of ten lonely years? And she did it; her nature rose to that height in the hour of need.

"Ah, my brother, that is what we must remember when we think of Helen. Others will know her only as the loveliest of created women—the World's Desire; the marvel of her beauty will be sung and told in every age and every land; but we of Egypt will preserve the memory of a Helen unknown elsewhere—to us she shall stand for ever as the type of Woman's faithfulness, Woman's divine self-sacrifice."

Now as the Egyptian Princess foretold, so it came to pass. For when Menelaus and Helen were come home at last, neither his own people nor the rest of the Greeks believed their marvellous tale. That Menelaus had visited Egypt on his return from Troy, was proved indeed by the Egyptian treasures he brought with him to Sparta. But that he had found his wife there—that she had never been at Troy—that the Helen whom all the Greek host had seen at the taking of the city was not a woman of flesh and

blood but a phantom—these things all thought a mere fable, invented to save Helen's name from reproach. And if none durst say as much to Sparta's King, yet Helen herself was quick to mark the half-suppressed smile or shrug with which their friends heard the story: she prevailed with him to speak of it no more; and before the happy and peaceful years that remained to them were ended, it was forgotten in Greek lands. Only in Egypt, as Theonoe had said, the tale lived on; until, in the after time, arose a singer of Greece who brought it back to remembrance. For this singer in one of his lays reviled the memory of Helen, as having been of all women the falsest; and thereupon he was stricken with blindness. Then, in answer to his prayers, a dream revealed to him how greatly he had wronged her; straightway he put forth another lay, wherein he told the miracle of the Phantom; and having made this atonement, his sight was restored to him.

CHAPTER VIII

How King Agamemnon came home

THE stars of a summer night looked down on the ancient royal stronghold of Mycenae and the mountain pass that it commanded. Under their mild, steadfast gaze, the sleeping landscape lay clear-cut as at noon-tide; only, colour had fled with the sunshine and all things wore Twilight's sober livery. The long road winding southward to the coast, the bare, rocky hillsides on either hand, the frowning pile of the castle, and the roofs of the little town that nestled at its foot—all were blent into one harmony of grey,

silver, and sable. It was the last watch of the night, and silence the most profound enwrapped Mycenae.

Above the main gateway of the castle, just over the entablature where two heraldic Lions ramped in stone, a solitary warder leaned upon the battlements, drowsily regarding the slow-moving pageant of the heavens. He was an old man, grizzled and bent; very weary he seemed, and his lack-lustre eyes were heavy as with long vigil. Presently he shook himself, gave a cavernous yawn, and began to pace to and fro, talking the while in hoarse, grumbling tones: "A dog's life I have had of it these ten years—ay, 'tis the tenth summer now since our Lord the King went forth to that accurséd war. But summer or winter, never a night's rest has his poor old servant; come rain, hail, or snow, I must keep this weary watch from dusk to daybreak, spying for the beacon-fire that is to tell us Troy has fallen at last. A brave device of the Queen's, forsooth—that chain of bonfires kept ready for kindling on hilltops and headlands, all the way from here to the Trojan shore! Proof of wifely affection, I have heard some call it; as if all Mycenae did not know why she needs prompt notice of her lord's return! But softly, good tongue; the very walls have ears hereabouts; if *they* should come to know half I think of them, there would be short work made of the old watch-dog, as they call me. For no love is lost, I trow, between him and those that rule all now. . . . Well, well! Things must be as they may; I can but pray for better times, and wait the good pleasure of the gods. May they have King Agamemnon in their keeping, and vouchsafe him safe

return, to set his house in order. . . . Heigh ho! will the dawn never come? . . . Methinks the sky grows paler yonder to eastward. . . . Why, what light is that? Can it be—yes, yes, it *is* the beacon on Mount Arachnaeus! O, welcome, welcome, blesséd fire, herald long-prayed for, harbinger of gladness to Argos and to me!"

A great banner of flame was indeed streaming heavenward from a mountain some score of miles away; the old watchman stared on it for a moment—rubbed his eyes—stared again—and fairly capered in his excess of joy. Then, loudly clapping his hands, he ran nimbly down from the battlement and shouted as he went, "Hurrah, hurrah! The beacon is alight! What ho, within there! Wake, rouse the Queen, tell her the news—Troy's taken, Troy's down at last! Hurrah for Agamemnon and our conquering host!"

And now the castle was quickly astir; the household flocked to the ramparts to look on the blazing signal for themselves; messengers went hurrying to the town; and when day dawned, the market-place was already thronged, and the smoke of sacrifice ascended from every altar in Mycenae. For the Queen, as the burghers were telling one another, had sent a great largesse of gold to the Council of Elders, commanding them to furnish burnt-offerings to all the temples in token of thanksgiving, and doles of corn and wine to the people; and after, to attend her further pleasure at the castle.

So by-and-by the white-haired seniors, fifteen in number, were seen pacing forth in their best array, green garlands on their heads, and leaning on their

staves of office. Slowly they mounted the steep road to the Lion Gate, and entered the courtyard beyond. Here they must wait awhile, the bustling retainers told them, for the Queen was busied in preparations of her own against her lord's return. Glad to rest, the old men sat them down on the broad flight of marble steps that led up to the spacious pillared portico of the royal dwelling-house, and fell into eager talk.

Tall folding-doors of bronze, embossed and inlaid with silver, stood at the middle of the rear wall of the portico, flanked to right and left by a white marble bust on a square pedestal—images of the household gods, Hermes and Apollo. In a little while these doors were flung open, and Clytemnestra's stately figure appeared, followed by her handmaids. Robed in white and crimson, splendid with jewels, the masses of her tawny hair bound with strings of pearls, she swept majestically forward, acknowledging only by a proud smile the reverent salutations of the Elders as they rose up with one accord. She carried in either hand a great wreath of fresh flowers and leaves; and with these she encircled the images of the two gods, bowing herself before each, and speaking words of prayer or praise in tones too low to be overheard. This done, the Queen seated herself on a chair, draped with a panther's skin, that her attendants placed for her, and addressed the Elders as from a throne:—

"Men of Mycenae, your well-tried loyalty to our House assured me that I should meet prompt and joyful obedience on bidding you celebrate this auspicious day, as is most seemly, by thanksgiving and

oblations to the gods, who have sent victory to the Greeks after their long trials. It is my will also that the folk should revel and keep holiday, and that you let them know they are sharing one festival with their countrymen overseas. For even while we rejoice and carouse, Agamemnon and his soldiery do likewise—in the Trojans' lordly habitations. Ay, think of it, friends—from years of danger and drudgery, rough lodging and coarse fare, they have passed at a bound to ease and luxury and good cheer! Each man has his fill of the best that opulent city can afford. And to give it all keener zest, the victors are mingled with the vanquished—but like oil and vinegar, that touch but will not mix. From their soft couches, under painted ceilings, our warriors, as they quaff the wine-cup, view the dainty dames of Troy grovelling in the dust, wailing over the bleeding corpses of their lovers and their kinsmen. . . . Elders, I bear a man's mind though I have but a woman's might, and I could wish myself the lowliest vassal in Agamemnon's train, to make one in that great scene of long deferred triumph. But 'tis enough for me to have done my duty here—as you can all bear witness—taking thought for the good governance of my lord's dominions, and looking well to the ways of my household. I would not seem a self-praiser, but I will add, it was *my* forethought provided and maintained those relays of flaming couriers that have flashed the great news hither over land and sea. Thus, when the King returns he will find his people ready to pay him a victor's honours, and in his own house such a welcome prepared for him as shall be—worthy of his deeds.

You have my leave to depart; farewell, be diligent in the charge I have laid upon you."

Then answered the headman of the Elders, "Your will, revered Clytemnestra, is our law; seeing it pleased the King that his beloved Consort should bear the sceptre over us during his absence. But we are fain to hear how soon you look for his coming. Surely not this day? For by your wise ordering the tidings of Troy's downfall have reached us more swiftly than eagles' pinions could have borne them."

"Not to-day," replied the Queen, "but on the third day from this our ships may well reach the shore of Argos—the gods permitting. And we shall do well to pray that they may crown their gracious favours to usward by vouchsafing the Greeks a safe and speedy voyage; and that the conquerors fall not under divine displeasure by any act of impiety or overweening insolence. Wherefore I will go even now within and offer prayer yet again for the granting of—my heart's desire." So saying, Clytemnestra withdrew into the palace with her handmaids.

As the bronze doors swung together behind her, the Elders drew close to one another with anxious looks; each seemed desirous, yet afraid, to speak; but the headman, after a glance round the empty court, said, almost in a whisper, "I know not, brothers, what may be in your minds, but for my part, I am besieged by nameless fears. What means the Queen to do? Does she think because we are old, we are utterly blind, we and the people to boot? Or thinks she, because she has carried things with a high hand and none has dared lift voice against her, that her guilt

will not be cried from the house-tops, once we have our rightful master back again ? "

" She will brazen it out, belike," piped another old man, " for a wonder 'tis to see how rarely she now plays the leal and loving wife. A shrewd blow to her are these tidings, yet could I have sworn joy unfeigned shone in her eyes as she spake of them."

" And so could I, neighbour," said the headman, " and that is what troubles me most. She *is* over-joyed that the King is on his way home—but why, tell me that ? Her power is gone from to-day ; her life may be forfeited too when all comes out—and she smiled as I have never seen her smile—since her Iphigeneia's death."

" Ah," said a third Elder softly, " now you touch the root of the matter. I have ever thought the Queen's evil courses came of revenge, rather than any love for—him I need not name. I had it from her old nurse that when she heard what Agamemnon had done with her daughter, she was like a lioness robbed of her whelps. None durst approach her, until, when she had nigh starved herself to death, *he* went in to the chamber where she lay. What passed between them, the gods alone know ; but presently the Queen called her women to her, and bade them bring food and wine, and a change of raiment, '*for,*' says she, '*this kinsman of mine has taught me a cure for my sorrow.*' From that hour, the man has scarce left her, as all Mycenae knows too well ; but here is the strange thing, my masters ! By the nurse's way of it, her Lady had never deigned him so much as a civil word before. Now to me it seems that she took

him solely to bring open dishonour on her wedded lord, being as she is, a woman by nature cold, and of an implacable spirit."

While they thus talked, the Elders had retraced their steps to the Lion Gate; just as they reached it, a man stepped hastily from its shadows, at sight of whom they broke one and all into cries of delight and astonishment. For it was Talthybius, the herald of Agamemnon.

"Is it possible?" they exclaimed, crowding about him to press his hands, "Talthybius here already—then is the King at hand, and the fleet? Welcome, dearly welcome, old friend! But say, by what miracle are you come within a day of Troy's capture?"

"Hush a moment, friends," said the tall, grey-bearded herald gravely, "I have first to speak to others." And advancing to the midst of the court-yard, he kneeled down and kissed the ground before the altar of Zeus of the Homestead. "I greet thee, sacred soil of my birthplace—I hail thee, O Zeus, Guardian and Preserver," he said solemnly; then rising, he stretched his arms towards the portico and cried in a loud voice, "And to thee, hail, Apollo, who long time sentest forth against us the bitter arrows of thy wrath, but now art turned again! Evermore, henceforth be thou to us Healer and not Destroyer! Hail, also, my own Hermes, thou flower of Heralds, and their King! Now, blessed Gods, let me die, since mine eyes have seen their desire at last, and my feet stand once more within the dear walls of home."

While Talthybius was yet speaking, the palace door again opened, and the Queen reappeared. "I

thought I knew that voice," she cried, smiling on the herald, "Welcome, worthy Talthybius. You come before we could have hoped, but not, you will find, before we are ready. My royal lord does well to make you his harbinger; for, as the proverb says, *Even good news is bettered when a good man brings it.*"

Talthybius knew not whether to be more surprised at Clytemnestra's composure, or her graciousness towards himself. For they had last parted when he conducted Iphigeneia on that pretended bridal journey to Aulis—and he knew the Queen too well to believe she had either forgotten or forgiven his share in deceiving her. He bethought him, however, that his approach to the castle might have been descried from the battlements in time for her to be told of it, and prepare herself to greet him thus calmly. With that subtle smile yet in her dark eyes, Clytemnestra now beckoned the Elders to draw near, saying, "We are all eagerness, Talthybius. Speak; what of your master and the Greek fleet? That Troy has fallen we knew by the signal-fires; but how the victors can have crossed the sea already passes our understanding."

Then Talthybius told how the city was taken many days since, and how Agamemnon delayed his homefaring until the wrath of Athena should be pacified. "And the King," said he, "would not suffer the first beacon—which was on Mount Ida—to be kindled until his ships were launched; desiring to spare you and his folk the sickness of hope deferred, were he forced to tarry long by Athena's displeasure. But when he had made such atonement to the goddess as

Calchas directed, she granted us the speediest voyage ever known between Troy and our Argive shore. For there we landed this morning ere sunrise; and by now the liegemen are scattered, every one to his own township and his father's house; and our Lord is on his road hither."

"Tell me one thing more," said Clytemnestra; "came King Menelaus along with his brother's fleet?"

"Alas, no," answered Talthybius; "Menelaus was of those who rashly set sail before us, and, it is much to be feared, made shipwreck in the dire tempest that immediately arose."

"The gods avert it!" devoutly exclaimed the headman of the Elders, "there could be no heavier misfortune to our King."

"That is a true word," said Clytemnestra, eyeing him gravely, "but—I hope for the best on such a day as this. Now, Talthybius, I would have you return to the King; greet him well from me, and say he will find me—unchanged; still guarding his hearth and home with a watch-dog's faithfulness."

The herald turned to depart, but at the same moment, a trumpet rang out from the castle's lower ward; there followed a joyous clamour of many voices, a din of many feet, and through the Lion Gate a procession entered the courtyard, headed by Agamemnon himself.

The King had reached Mycenae almost as soon as his herald, and had halted in the town only long enough to have his coming announced to his wife, and to arrange an entry into his palace befitting the conqueror of Troy. Crowned with an Eastern diadem,

and wearing a mantle of Tyrian purple over his gilded corslet, he stood proudly erect in his war-chariot, a sceptre and a spear in either hand. And the chariot was drawn along by six youths in Trojan habits, captives from some of the townships sacked during the war. Other slaves laden with glittering spoils, a troop of women captives, and the men of the royal body-guard, made up the retinue, which advanced in slow and stately fashion across the court, amid the plaudits of the hastily assembled household. Arrived at the steps of the portico, Agamemnon halted his chariot; cast a triumphant glance around him; acknowledged by a gesture the loud "All hail!" of the Elders; and made oration as follows:

"First, as in duty bound, I hail Argos the mother-land, and her protecting Gods, by whose aid I have exacted from Priam's city a reckoning for guilt, and am returned in safety. Just and true are those Heavenly Ones, who, not enduring that the evildoers should continue in prosperity, have laid Troy even with the ground, and her children within her. The smoke of her burning ariseth even yet; her princes lie yet unburied, a prey to dogs and birds, in the palace courts that the young Lion of the Myrmidons made red with blood of the mighty. This is the Gods' doing, marvellous in our eyes; to them, therefore, I hereby render thanks, worship, and praise, or ever I cross once more the threshold of my home.

"Next, I thank you, worthy Elders of Mycenae, for these your loyal greetings, which I doubt not to be heartfelt; dear and grateful are such to one who has learnt by hard experience how envy, under

the cloak of friendship, ever pursues the exalted in rank and renown. Ay, you would scarce credit me, did I tell all I endured from the jealousy and malice of some that had professed themselves most ardent in my cause! Odysseus alone, among the chiefs, my allies—he, mark you, who showed the deepest unwillingness to join our enterprise—Odysseus was the one man that proved a true yoke-fellow, bearing with me the burden and heat of the day. Would with all my heart I knew what is become of him—whether he escaped shipwreck or whether I should mourn him as a comrade lost for ever!

"But enough of this, for I have yet to greet my royal Consort. For the present, trusty lieges, I take leave of you; this day I give to feasting and much-needed repose; to-morrow we will meet in council, that I may hear from you how the State has thriven in my absence, and take such measures as may be needful, both for the fostering of health in the body politic and for the cure of ills therein, call they for mild salves or the surgeon's knife."

All this while Clytemnestra had kept her place at the front of the portico: silent, bending forward a little, with eyes fixed on the King, she appeared to listen reverently to his every word. But at this pause in his harangue, she swiftly descended the steps to the side of the chariot, caught Agamemnon's hand in hers, and pressed it fervently to her lips. And as he drew it quickly though not ungently away, surprised and ill-pleased that his haughty Queen should offer him such a mark of love and homage in the public view, she seemed to master her emotion by a

strong effort; then, turning to the Elders, addressed them in ringing tones:

"I think no shame, good and grave leaders of our citizens, to testify before you, both by word and deed, the love I bear my wedded lord. Nay, I desire to say what I have to say to him in your presence, for none can witness to the truth of it better than yourselves."

"What needs this, Clytemnestra?" her husband interposed, frowning; "it were more seemly, and more like yourself, to forbear speech until we are alone."

"I pray you pardon me, my lord," she answered with a caressing smile, "and let me have my way, for my heart is so full that speak I must. Bethink you, I have kept silence ten years! You will not grudge me as many minutes wherein to count over my sorrows past for the crowning of present joy? Listen then; first I reckon my days and nights of loneliness. For no greater need has a woman, be she never so wise, than a man's strong arm to lean upon; but I, widowed in all but name, must dwell solitary in this great house, haunted by fears and harassed by incessant rumours of disaster. You remember, worthy Elders, how many and many a time you found me plunged in grief by reports that the King was wounded? Why, had they all been true, his body had been pierced with as many holes as—a net. While as for worse tidings, thrice we heard that he was slain; and thrice did my women snatch the noose from my neck, cheating me of the death I sought in my frenzied despair. . . . Dear Gods, when I think what a life was mine, all my wonder is that I did not end it long since! . . . But I will not

lengthen out the tale; these tear-dimmed eyes, this face so careworn and faded, are witnesses enough to the double load I have borne—by day, the charge of city and realm; by night, the sleepless longings of a desolate wife."

To all this, uttered in tones of the most moving sweetness, Agamemnon had lent ear with growing complacency; his sense of its unfitness to the time and place was soon lost in the flattering consciousness of having inspired this cold, regal woman with affection so deep and enduring. That she, of whom he had always been at once proud and secretly afraid, should have pined for him all these years, filled his cup of triumph to overflowing.

But the Elders meanwhile had listened in a sort of stupor to what they knew was a tissue of lies. Old, feeble, and slow-witted, they felt themselves powerless to cope with the Queen's astounding effrontery. Yet something must be done—some word of warning spoken to the King; he could not be left another hour the dupe of this monstrous deception, the laughing-stock of his own servants. At all risks, the traitress and her paramour must be denounced forthwith—but who was to do it?

Clytemnestra failed not to interpret the troubled glances exchanged by the old men. She wiped away the tears that had gathered in her eyes, and spoke again:

"But no more of the past, my husband, for its bitterness is swallowed up in joy. Hail, victor! Hail, Pillar of this House, strong Rock of our defence, Light and Glory of the land, welcome to a people's eyes as the dayspring from on high! Descend from

the chariot, King, and enter the palace of your sires —and you, my handmaidens, cover the steps with yon gold-inwoven purple robes, that the foot of Troy's conqueror may find meet treading. So, have you done? Come, then, come, dear heart; the bath and the banquet wait you within."

"King's daughter, mistress of my hearth and home," answered Agamemnon graciously, "I might say your speech of welcome matches in length my absence from you; nevertheless I have heard it gladly, saving your last words. But these mislike me; spare me, I charge you, high-sounding terms of praise, and bid me not set foot on those costly treasures of the loom. These are honours for a god, not for a man."

"Nay, now," said the Queen, "think you Priam would have scrupled to walk on purple and gold, had *he* been the victor?"

"I trow not," replied her husband, "but the monarchs of the East delight in all manner of luxury that we Greeks think only fit for women. No, Lady mine! I am loth to cross you, but I will not do this thing."

"And yet," said she, "there is a saying of the wise that an act of humility in the hour of triumph averts from men the jealousy of the Powers above. Such an act will be yours, my King, if you, the all-conquering warrior, suffer yourself to be conquered in this matter by a frail woman's pleading. Come, deny her not! Call her childish if you will, but let her boast herself this once the world-victor's victor!"

The heart of Agamemnon was not proof against the sweet cajolery of her voice and look. "Be it so," he said, "but at least I will put off the shoes from

my feet, in token that I tread this gorgeous carpeting in no spirit of insolence. Hither, boy! Undo these latchets."

A young slave sprang to obey; barefooted, the King stepped down to his wife's side, and took her by the hand. Then might all see plainly a black-muffled form crouching on the floor of the chariot, which had been hidden by the sweeping folds of his mantle. He pointed thereto, and said, "I commend yonder stranger to your care, my Queen. She is Cassandra, daughter of Priam, whom the Greeks assigned to me as a choice meed of valour, at the division of the captives. Deal gently with her, I pray you, remembering that the gods look with favour on such as, being strong, are merciful. Now, since you will have it so, I enter my house over this soft, purple pathway." So saying, he mounted the steps.

"A sea there is," cried Clytemnestra exultantly—"and who shall drain it?—that breeds by thousands the shelly murex, whose purple blood sells for its weight in silver. And inexhaustible as that sea is the treasure of our great house; then fear no lack to us, O King, of that precious dye; fear not, I say, though I seem to you prodigal thereof, that you shall ever want for robes as royally empurpled as these you tread!" And with that, she laughed aloud, and followed after her husband. But at the threshold of the door, she turned again, and stretched out her arms heaven-ward, looking up, and cried with a great voice, "Zeus, Zeus the Fulfiller, fulfil thou my prayers! Fulfil for me the work that I have in hand!"

At that cry, Cassandra rose suddenly in the chariot,

flung off her heavy veil, and stood staring at the Queen with dilated eyes. "Come hither, damsel," said Clytemnestra, haughtily returning her gaze, "follow me within, and take your place among the crowd of our house-thralls. Nay, never look so disdainfully! Know you not, great Heracles himself was once sold into bondage? And since Zeus has ordained for you the lot of a slave, be thankful you are come into a house great and wealthy from of old. For the yoke of new-ennobled masters is wont to be heavy; but at *our* hands you may look for—what custom decrees."

Never a word answered the Trojan Princess, but stood like one in a trance, gripping the chariot-rail with both hands.

"Do you hear me?" cried the Queen imperiously.

"Obey her, maiden, for your own sake," whispered the headman of the Elders, anxiously; then, as Cassandra neither spoke nor stirred, he said aloud, "The captive seems in a daze, royal Lady, like some wild thing newly snared. Be not offended with her, for she is dumb from fear, not wilfulness."

"That may be," said Clytemnestra carelessly, "or perchance, being a Barbarian, she understands not our Greek tongue. In any case, I have not leisure to stand here waiting, while a slave sets my orders at defiance. Time enough to deal with *her*, when the sacrifice preparing within is accomplished. Meanwhile I cannot linger—the victim stands even now by the household altar." And with a last smiling glance at the group of Elders, she passed between the bronze doors, leaving them open behind her.

Stewards of the household now conducted Agamemnon's train to their destined quarters by a side-door of the mansion; the Queen's handmaids, bearing the purple robes, likewise withdrew; but the Elders still tarried, looking irresolutely and gloomily at one another.

"There is some mischief brewing," said the Headman, suddenly; "the very air seems charged with it. I can scarce breathe, my heart beats so thickly. Would to the gods we could get speech of the King —but it is too late now. . . . I dread—alas, I know not what!"

"The Queen will do nothing yet awhile," said an Elder, very low, "for I hear Aegisthus has gone with a hunting-party to the hills, on a three days' chase. My hope is, he will now fly the country; if so, all may yet be hushed up, and good times come again."

The Headman was about to reply, when a low wail rang in their startled ears—"O, O, Earth! Apollo! Apollo!"

Unmarked of the old men, Cassandra had glided from the chariot; looking round, they saw her kneeling at the foot of Apollo's image, a slender, black-robed figure, with dark, chapleted head bowed almost to the ground.

"O, O, Earth! Apollo! Apollo!" came her voice again, in tones of heart-rending anguish.

"Peace, maiden, peace!" they cried out, trembling at the ill omen, "call not thus on Apollo, for nought hath the bright god to do with mourning and lamentation."

But Cassandra paid them no heed: "Apollo!"

she wailed yet again, "Apollo, my Destroyer! Wilt destroy me twice! God of the Ways? What way is this wherein thou hast led me—to what dwelling bringest thou me at last?"

"If you know not that, maiden," said an Elder, pompously, "learn from me that this is the royal Palace of Atreus——"

"Hush, neighbour," the Headman admonished him, "see you not her griefs have driven the maiden distraught? Beshrew me, but I pity her from my heart."

"Ah, the Palace of Atreus?" said Cassandra, springing to her feet, "I had thought it was some slaughter-house. Fie, how it smells of blood!"

She threw her head aloft, snuffing the air, and with a violent shudder, "Yes, *blood*," she panted, "I smell it—I see it—this pavement, these doors, are all bedewed with it! But yonder, O gods, hovering above the lintel, what ghastly, mangled shapes are those? Children—little children, that bear platters of raw flesh—and point to it—O horror, horror, horror . . . what is it they say? No more, I can endure no more. . . ." And she pressed both hands over her eyes, as though to shut out some frightful vision.

Then did the Elders turn pale and tremble, well knowing whose were the gruesome phantoms that the Seer-maiden had beheld, and the hideous crime that once had polluted the halls of Atreus. For Thyestes, his brother, did that King a wrong most foul and most unnatural; and he devised in requital such a deed that the sun turned back upon his heavenly course in loathing at the sight thereof. He privily

slew the two young children of Thyestes, and caused their flesh to be served up to their father at a banquet to which he had bidden him. And the curse wherewith Thyestes cursed Atreus his brother in that hour froze the blood of them that heard it. Yet Atreus died in a good old age, and slept with his fathers, and Agamemnon his son had long reigned in his stead.

Remembering these things, the Elders gazed awe-struck on Cassandra, where she stood quivering from head to foot; and the Headman whispered, "This is she of whom we have heard, the inspired prophetess of Troy. Mark, brethren, how the divine frenzy glitters from her eyes, and shakes her as a reed is shaken by the wind. Hush, she speaks again."

"Ha, woman pitiless," burst out Cassandra, turning her wild eyes on the open doorway, "is this *the work thou hadst in hand?* I see thee minister to thy lord the water of cleansing—laving soil of travel from those goodly limbs—ah, ah, what follows? . . . Is it a net she flings about him? Yea, Death's own hunting-net! . . . O, look—O, keep off the cow from the bull—she gores him through the toils—again she strikes—he falls, crashing, into the water. I tell you, the snares of death are spread about that laver. . . ."

"Brothers," said the Headman, as Cassandra paused for breath, leaning against the doorway, "it is plain that the divine frenzy has seized this maiden, which Apollo is wont to send upon his votaresses. He has revealed to her by a vision the horror that broods over this house; so much is manifest; but she has seen something more—past or yet to come,

who knows? I would we had here one skilled to interpret the dark sayings of prophets and seers."

"There is no need, old man," exclaimed Cassandra, turning suddenly, "I have done with riddles, for now the Word within me leaps forth unveiled in the face of day. Hear me, then; *you shall look on Agamemnon slain.*"

"Silence, wretched girl!" cried they all, aghast. "Speak no ill-omened words! Now the blessed gods forfend that ever this thing should come to pass!"

"Ay, take to your prayers," returned Cassandra, bitterly, "but meanwhile—others—take to their weapons."

"What others? Whom mean you?" babbled the trembling Elders.

But the prophetess reeled to and fro in an ecstasy of terror. "Alas!" she shrieked, "What fire dances before me? It wraps me round—I burn! Spare me, Apollo! Lo, that same two-footed Lioness, she that couched with the craven Wolf what time her kingly mate ranged afar—she will slay me too, hapless that I am! Yea, as one that pours a last baneful drop into a deadly potion, so hath she cast her lord's love for a bondmaid into the brimming cup of her hate. . . . And I, what have I more to do with you, vain trappings that have brought me nothing but derision? Off, laurel chaplet; off from my neck, white fillets of plaited wool!"

So saying, she tore off those badges of her prophetic calling, and snapped in twain her light wand of office; and, flinging them all at the base of Apollo's image, "Lie there!" she cried, "and perish like her that

wore you, and now breaks you as she is to be broken this same hour! Thus I cast off Apollo's livery—yet not I; no, 'tis the God himself strips it from his servant—disloyal once, and ever since led by his hand through scornings, agonies, shame, to this goal of death. . . . But wherefore should I shrink? Wherefore bewail myself, or him I now call master? Fie on thee, daughter of Troy; hast *thou* tears for thy fate and his, thou whose eyes have seen thine own people and thy father's house whelmed in one sea of blood? Nay, rather will I greet Death with a cheer, crying *All hail* as I enter these his portals."

With that, she would have crossed the threshold; but the Headman called to her, "Stay, maiden most hapless! If by your art you indeed foresee such doom, why go you as a sheep to the slaughter? Flee while you may—we pity and would fain aid you."

"My hour is come," she answered, "to fly would avail me nothing."

"There spoke a brave heart," sighed an Elder; "of a truth, this is a maiden to win not men's pity only, but their praise."

"Praise such as men give not to—the happy," Cassandra answered him, smiling wanly. "But now farewell, strangers. World-wearied, I go hence; unlamenting, unfaltering on the verge of doom. May the blade strike home, and my soul pass without a struggle! I pray only for that. And if you shall hear my voice uplifted, remember it is not in fear; I do but raise Agamemnon's dirge—and mine. . . . . Yet one word more. Bear witness how I died, when another woman's life is spilt within these halls, and

another husband evil-mated is smitten down. . . . For the avenger of a father's blood will surely come, though he tarry yet many years, to the work the high gods have sworn he shall accomplish. Hear me, O Sun, thou all-beholding heavenly witness, on whom I look my last! Be it remembered, I pray, in that hour of reckoning, how the murderess struck not alone the royal and the mighty; may the death of a poor defenceless slave pass not unrequited when they shall pay one price for all their guilt. . . . Ah me, what is our life? At best, only the painted semblance of true bliss; anon comes the wayward artist, Fortune, and with one sweep of the dripping sponge blots out the picture. . . . And more than my own fate, it moves my pity to feel the tears in mortal things."

With these words, Cassandra entered the palace; firmly she stepped, her dark head held proudly erect; and as she went she chanted sweet and low the ancient dirge that the Trojan women were wont to sing over their dead.

As in a dream, the old men hearkened until her singing died away within the house; deep silence followed, and still they lingered irresolute, looking perplexedly one upon another.

"We have seen strange things to-day," murmured the Headman at last; "our King returns in triumph, one might say he stands secure on the very pinnacle of good fortune—yet I know not what shadow of evil clouds all my mind with misgivings. This wild Cassandra—I trust her bodements are but fruit of a brain o'erwrought with sorrows; for who dare touch a hair of her head, seeing she hath found favour with

the King? . . . But what if she can discern indeed the hidden counsels of the gods, and spoke very truth concerning the fall of the man they have so highly exalted? Pray we Zeus, brothers, that it prove not so; pray fervently that the iniquity of Atreus, revealed to her in ghastly vision, rest not upon his son, nor the curse of the innocent blood upon this house."

"So pray we all," responded his fellows, earnestly.

The words had scarcely passed their lips when a loud cry resounded from within the palace—"O gods, I am smitten to the bone!"

"*Whose voice was that?*" quavered the Headman, shaking as with an ague; "Hush, hark again!"

"Ah me, another stroke!" rang the agonised voice again; there was a deep, hollow groan—then silence.

"It is the King's voice!" cried the Headman, frantically. "Help for the King! Rouse the citizens, brothers! Cry *Treason, treason!*"

"No time for that," answered an Elder, "Quick, let us rush in together and rescue him!"

"Alack, we are weaponless and feeble," said another; "what aid could we render the King, even he if be not already past all help?"

"Ay, and that he is, I fear," chimed in a third, "yon was his dying groan—by this he is no more, alas the day!"

"Then we will in and die with him," said the Headman vehemently, "for better death than to live under usurping tyrants."

"Well spoken, Cephalus! Lead, and we follow," cried several, and began mounting the steps with the best speed of their agéd limbs.

But, "Tarry, neighbours, tarry," said one very ancient man; "wed not with Haste, Delay's half-sister, lest you mar utterly what may yet be mended by taking thought. No plight so desperate but prudent counsels may better it! Come, devise with me what were best to do. And first, are we so certain mischief *has* befallen the King? Was that indeed his voice we heard, or did our fears beguile us into thinking so? For my part, I have no clearness in the matter. Some one—some man—cried out that he was wounded; that is the utmost of our knowledge; and on that are we to rush brawling in upon the household guards, who may well cut us down for our pains? No, before all else we must find means to learn how it fares with Agamemnon."

Now while this ancient yet spoke, and the rest halted, listening with divided minds, the half-open doors were rolled back and Clytemnestra appeared upon the threshold. Framed in the gloom of the portal, yet with full sunlight striking on her gold-bound brows, the Queen stood motionless, silent, a thing of beauty and of terror. For her right hand held aloft a long-shafted axe, and from the gleaming blade gouts of blood fell pattering upon the marble floor. There was a dark-red smear across her white, uplifted arm; and the crimson of her mantle had turned here and there to a deeper hue. Triumphant, calm, with smiling eyes, she towered above the quaking Elders like Victory incarnate. While one might count a score, they stood dumbly at gaze, frozen with dread. At last the Queen spoke in level, measured tones, yet with a note of exultation not to be sup-

pressed: "No shame I hold it to disavow those fair professions I uttered so lately in your hearing. For how, save by feigning love and loyalty, shall one prevail against the adversary who comes in guise of a friend? And now my warfare is accomplished; the deed is done that I have purposed and prepared for these many years. *I* did it, I! Yea, I will avouch it in the face of this sun, and call you all to witness, leaders of the folk; for let come what come may—obloquy, ruin, death—I shall have had my hour. Hear, all of you, how your King was slain, that hereafter you may bear full testimony against me—if you dare. Like a duteous wife I tended my lord the while he bathed; and as he rose up out of the bath I cast over his head and limbs—what think you? A drying towel? No, but a great web of hempen meshes that my own hands had made . . . for his wearing, strong and heavy as any fisher's net. Quick as thought, I twisted the folds about him, and smote him with *this*—it lay hidden at hand. Once, twice I struck; at each blow he cried out, staggering and writhing in the toils; a third I dealt him as he fell prone—'*There is luck in the third*,' says the proverb. And in his fall, the spurting blood bedewed me; ah, sweeter than summer rain to a thirsty flower was the touch of those ruddy drops! . . . But enough of words; yourselves shall see my handiwork. . . . Ho, you within there! Bring hither the royal couch!"

Then straightway four tall slaves carried forth a bed, broad and low, covered over with a great purple mantle; and they set it down in the midst of the

porch. And as Clytemnestra drew off that sumptuous coverlet, cries of horror broke from the Elders; for two corpses lay side by side beneath it, and the still, upturned faces were those of their King and the Trojan seeress.

The Queen looked down upon the two for a moment with a baleful smile; then, glancing scornfully at the shuddering old men, "It is all one to me," she said, "whether you applaud or curse me for this deed. Here lies Agamemnon, my wedded husband—and the darling of every yellow-haired Chryseis in Troyland. See, I have laid beside him—was 't not well done?—the last of his paramours; nor *his* alone, may be, seeing the inspired damsel has been cooped up on shipboard among our galley-slaves. Like one of her Apollo's swans she died, fluting her own dirge; I killed her, not to part a pair of faithful lovers—and now let Agamemnon enjoy for ever the minion he shamed not to bring openly under my roof! Say what you will, Elders of Argos, these two have fared as they deserved. For the rest, I care not."

"O shameless! O heart of flint!" burst out the Headman of the Elders. "What insane root hast thou eaten of, to make thee dare this atrocious deed? My King, my King, slain in thy high places! But think not, proud woman, to escape vengeance; exult, insult over our helpless age, but know there be men in Argos that will drive thee an outlaw from the land—if indeed they spare thy royalty the murderer's doom of public stoning. Ay, justice shall be done, and swiftly; the citizens will look to it!"

"Will they so?" answered the Queen, her eyes

flashing fire; "Is justice so dear to the Argive folk? I marvel, then, that the man who lies here was never outlawed, and there was no word of stoning *him* when he came home. For if I am a murderess, what was he? The slayer of his own child—a tender maid—the light and joy of her mother's eyes. Now, by the dark Avengers of the Slain, by those Powers, nameless, viewless, that hunt down the shedder of blood, 'tis I, Clytemnestra, that have executed justice and judgment this day in Argos! A life for a life have I taken; a guilty soul have I required for the soul of my lost innocent. They thought to fool me with a lying tale, how that she died not, but vanished clean away . . . little I heeded it! No, this many a year she dwells in the dim House of Hades; and even now, methinks, she greets the loving father who sent her thither. . . . Ah, *then* was the time to talk of justice, good citizens; but since you held your peace then, you will do wisely to hold it still. For here comes one by whose trusty aid I shall so bridle unruly tongues—that they wag no more."

So saying, she pointed to a side-door of the palace, whence a man in rich armour strode into the court, followed by a bevy of mail-clad spearmen. He was below middle stature, olive-skinned, with a face of womanish comeliness, whereon evil passions had set their sign manual. The Elders started and shrank back at his approach, with looks of deep aversion; nimbly he mounted the steps, and ran to the bier, and as he gazed thereon he laughed aloud.

"O joyful day!" he cried, "wherein this son of Atreus pays at last the penalty of his father's crime

to me, the son of Thyestes! Verily, gods there be that judge upon the earth; well may I affirm it, beholding with glad heart this mighty man lying full low, even as a beast in the snare of the hunter. Yea, the Hunters of men, the dread Erinnyes, daughters of the Curse, have flung this net about him; but I, Aegisthus, wove the meshes thereof! All mine, the plot that has destroyed him. Aha, the King's poor kinsman, slighted of all, barely suffered within his gates—where stands he now, and what plight is this he finds you in, most illustrious cousin? By all the gods, now were I content to die, having seen my desire upon mine enemy!"

"Forbear, Aegisthus," exclaimed the Headman, stung by indignation, "we will not brook to hear you thus insolently exult over the fallen. Out of your own mouth we convict you of murder, and a murderer's death you shall die at the hands of the people."

"You threaten me, do you?" answered Aegisthus, scowling upon him, "It is well seen, greybeard, that you have not learned wisdom with age, or you would not provoke a quarrel with the stronger. But we will try what schooling may do for you, old as you are; fetters, darkness, and hunger are teachers that work wonders, I have heard, when learners prove stubborn. One thing at least you shall be taught, and all Argos likewise—that I am master here."

"I defy you, blusterer," returned the old man, undaunted, "*You*, forsooth, to set up for a tyrant—*you* to lord it over our free citizens—a coward that durst not act the treason he plotted, but skulked in ambush while a woman did his accursèd work!"

"Why, as for that," said Aegisthus, with an uneasy glance at the Queen, "though I have masked my hate from childhood, no man can feign and flatter so cunningly as a woman . . . and our whole hope lay in beguiling the King to the last. But now we are rid of him; his royal treasury and all the golden spoils he brought home are in our hands; think you I cannot purchase to myself an armed power thrice as great as all this land can muster, to uphold my rule and crush rebellion in blood? Nay, spare your nods and winks at the guards—they have long been in *my* pay; and not a man of the household but would go through fire and water for the Queen. Submit yourselves, then, if you be not fools; else you shall find my yoke heavy, and grievous to be borne."

"Never, never! Death before slavery to the false and vile!" shouted the Elders, beside themselves with rage and despair; "but we will sell our lives dearly, brothers! Down with the murdering traitor!"

And suddenly each man drew the knife from his girdle and rushed at Aegisthus. "Hither to me, guards!" he called out, and leaped back, white to the lips; fury lent the old men speed, and they had reached the portico before the guards overtook and surrounded them.

"Out swords, and kill me these dotards!" cried Aegisthus savagely; "their blood is on their own heads. Strike, I say!"

But Clytemnestra, who had remained all this while mutely attentive, sprang forward, waving back the spearmen with an imperious gesture, and stood between the Elders and Aegithus. "Nay, dearest,"

she said to him, "I will have no more blood shed this day. Enough has been spilt already; let us not imbrue our hands afresh, lest we seem butchers rather than the ministers of Justice. Come, go in with me—and you, foolish ancients, depart to your own homes, ere worse betide you.

"What, am I to be flouted, threatened, defied to my face, without redress?" said Aegisthus sullenly; "well, be it so—but mark me, old dogs, I'll be revenged one day on the whole yelping pack of you!"

"That day you shall never see, O pest and infamy of this land," answered the Headman, "if it please the gods to preserve the hope of Argos, the boy Orestes. For when he comes to manhood, he will full surely bring his father's murderers to a reckoning, and mete unto them the measure that they have meted withal."

"Ah," sneered Aegisthus, "hopes, they say, are the food of . . . exiles. Much good may that fare do you when banished the kingdom, as I will see you are, for your seditious turbulence!"

"Well crowed for a craven!" retorted the Headman. "Look, neighbours, how the gallant struts and swells himself, like a cock before his hen!"

"You shall pay me for this insolence," exclaimed Aegisthus, drawing his sword. "Guards, seize this ringleader of rebels."

"Hold, my Aegisthus," said the Queen calmly; "these impotent babblers are beneath our notice. Let them rave on; but you and I, as joint sovereigns, will take order for the safety and welfare of the realm."

With that, she took Aegisthus by the hand and led

him into the house. Their retinue followed them; and the Elders, spent with grief and weariness, gave one last look at their dead King, and crept forlornly away through the Lion Gate. Unwept, untended, stark in his bloody shroud, the conqueror of Troy lay till nightfall before the threshold he had crossed that morn in triumph; then, with maimed rites, and none but hirelings for mourners, he was buried in a narrow grave of earth.

Such a home-coming did his wife prepare for King Agamemnon.

EPILOGUE

THE Greeks of the after time, looking back upon the legendary past, saw in the War of Troy the first great achievement of their race, acting together under one leader against an alien foe. For though renowned warriors had lived before Agamemnon, their triumphs had been won over men of their own blood and speech, in feuds between chieftain and chieftain, clan and clan. Thus the fall of Priam's city became to the descendants of her conquerors a type and foreshadowing of those immortal victories whereby they saved Greece from the yoke of the Barbarian.

But the famous Siege had another aspect, which took no less firm a hold on the imagination of the Greeks. If it marked the dawning of their national greatness, it marked also the end of those "brave days of old" known in song and story as the Age of the Heroes. One of their most ancient poets sang how, from a primal, happy Age of Gold, mankind had passed through a Silver and a Bronze to an Iron Age, full of all iniquities and oppressions that are done under the sun; and how that Age should endure until the wickedness of mortals provoked the gods to forsake them utterly, and brought destruction on the world. But between the Bronze Age and the Iron, there had been, as it were, a pause in the universal decline of things—a time like those rare and lovely days of late Autumn that seem a renewal of Spring. A time when the gods still walked visibly among men, and men themselves were as gods in strength and prowess, compared to the weaklings of to-day; when all the earth was fairyland; when high-hearted sons of kings sailed on perilous quests to undiscovered countries, or roved at large, waging war on giants, dragons, and chimaeras dire. Of such were Perseus, Bellerophon, Jason, Theseus, and Heracles, greatest of them all; to these and their compeers the Greeks gave the name of *the Heroes*, signifying thereby a race that was half divine. For the Heroes, it was told, albeit of the same clay as other mortals, had in their veins the blood of gods, who had seen the daughters of men that they were fair, and taken themselves brides from among the fairest.

Now the chieftains that fought at Troy were of this

wondrous breed ; but none of their generation equalled their forefathers in might and renown, except the son of Peleus ; insomuch that the ancient Nestor, remembering the days of Heracles, was wont to bewail their falling-off from the greatness of their sires, and the approaching decay of their race. And they lightly regarded his words, as an old man's querulous dispraise of the present ; and when Troy fell at last many derided him, asking who among the Heroes he had known in his youth ever toiled and triumphed more gloriously ? But for all that, the boasters lived to learn that their victory was dearly bought—so dearly, that it might seem the gods were after all on the side of the vanquished.

For not only had the flower of the Greek host perished in the long strife ; not only were their ranks grievously thinned by pestilence, by the sword, and finally by shipwreck ; but most of the Heroes who reached home alive found bitter trouble in store for them. Some, like Agamemnon, returned to wives grown faithless ; among these was the valiant Diomed, who by treason domestic was driven from his city of Argos, and with a band of loyal liegemen sought a new home on the far shores of Italy. Some found the hearts of their folk estranged by the years of absence, and a generation risen to manhood who knew them not, neither reverenced their authority ; others, again, must do battle with usurping kinsmen, who had taken their lands in possession. Soon sedition, conspiracy, and rebellion were rife throughout the length and breadth of Greece ; city was divided against city and house against house ; almost every-

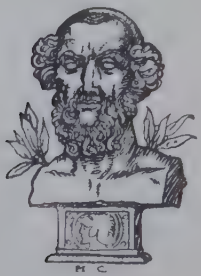
where, the return of the old masters brought not peace but a sword to the homes they had yearned for so long. And on a land thus weakened there began to descend out of the mountains of the North swarm after swarm of invaders—the warlike Dorian folk, who were of Greek stock, but as yet ruder and fiercer than their kindred in the South. To city after city came their roving bands, sometimes as marauders, sometimes as allies of this or that faction within; but wherever they came, there sooner or later the Dorians were lords over all, ruling with the strong hand. So the old order changed, yielding place to new, and the sceptre departed from the ancient heroic houses.

But this great upheaval was not wrought all at once; and by favour of the gods, certain Heroes of whom this book has told ended their days peaceably in their own land. Nestor, Menelaus, and Philoctetes were of this number. Neoptolemus was permitted of Fate to gladden the eyes of the agéd Peleus and reign in his stead; more we tell not here, save that his earthly course was brief as it was glorious, like his father's before him. As for Odysseus, who knows not the marvellous tale of his long wanderings, and all he saw and endured, ere he regained his island home and the wife whose constancy, sorely tried, had never wavered? Yet the man of guileful counsels, "the close contriver of all harms," escaped not the day of reckoning. The *Odyssey* leaves him in the hour of return and victory; for he that told this first and greatest of adventure-stories knew that a happy ending is the Golden Rule for such. But in

the lays of lesser bards many things were chronicled concerning the old age and death of Odysseus; not set down here, because each singer's tale so differed from the rest that the Greeks themselves knew not which to believe. Only this much was certain, that Odysseus became once more a wanderer, and died by violence at the last, and strangers took the inheritance that should have been his son's. Thus he also had his reward, reaping as he had sown.

After this manner ended the Age and race of the Heroes; on whom, though they knew it not, their sun was going down for evermore

"When sacred Troy did shed her towers for tears of overthrow."



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